

Big Flame

IS THE NORTH EAST OF IRELAND AN 'ORDINARY STATE'?

NO

THE SIX NORTH EAST Counties of Ireland have existed as a quasi-state for 60 years. It was carefully carved out of the nine-county province of Ulster to ensure that a privileged Loyalist minority could enforce their rule. In the years before and during World War One, Loyalists had openly armed to resist Irish Home Rule. British army officers at the Curragh camp, when ordered to move against the Loyalists, refused to do so and mutinied.

After the all-Ireland elections of 1918, Sinn Fein, who had won an overwhelming majority, formed Dail Eirann, the Dublin government. The British government declared it illegal and waged a vicious war against the Irish people.

It was after this that they carved out the six counties, as the largest possible area that the Loyalists could safely hold under British rule.

Any pretence of democracy in an artificial state such as 'Northern Ireland' is a sham—only when Ireland is united, as the majority of Irish people want, can there be lasting peace. The sooner Britain gets out the better.



**No British Policies
END PARTITION**

Saturday November 15th 1p.m.
assemble: London, Embankment
MARCH WITH THE HUNGER
STRIKE SUPPORT CONTINGENT

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HAVE REPUBLICAN PRISONERS BEEN TRIED AND CONVICTED UNDER 'ORDINARY

LAW'?

NO

Since Britain created the 'state' of 'Northern Ireland', its survival has depended on special powers, laws different from those in England. Current legislation has further restricted the rights of the individual.

As a direct result of these Emergency Provisions (sic), there are now almost 500 political prisoners in Long Kesh wearing only blankets because they rightly refuse to concede to their captors and wear prison uniforms. These men and over 30 women in Armagh Prison are the victims of a conveyor belt system, designed to stamp out dissent.

RESTORE POLITICAL STATUS

DEMONSTRATE
LONDON DEC. 7th

look out for further details
VICTORY TO THE HUNGER STRIKERS

The so-called security forces have the power to detain anyone without solicitor or doctor for 72 hours, which can then be extended to five days. In recent years over ten thousand men and women have been interrogated by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). Of these, over five thousand have been charged with 'scheduled offences'. All such trials have one judge and NO jury. In cases where possession of weapons or explosives is alleged, the accused is obliged to *prove his or her innocence*.

The overwhelming majority of people charged with 'scheduled offences' are found guilty in these rigged courts, about 80% solely on signed confessions obtained during detention. The extensive practice of torture in Castlereagh detention centre (where most confessions are extracted) has been well-documented by Amnesty International and the Bennet Report.

The British Government is hypocritical to deny political status to prisoners jailed under such blatantly political conditions, rather, they wish to continue to deny the existence of their conveyor belt of non-justice. If it takes a hunger strike to force them to admit this, then it is the duty of every socialist to support the hunger strikers in every way we can.



Editorial

VICTORY TO THE HUNGER STRIKERS

The decision of seven Republican prisoners to go on hunger strike is not an unreasonable response considering the way they have been treated by their jailers - with the full endorsement of the British Government, and largely ignored by the rest of the world. Their decision is entirely understandable considering the war of attrition that has been maintained in the six counties since 1969.

More specifically, it is an act of defiance

against the treatment they have suffered at the hands of the occupying forces and their allies in the RUC and the prison service.

Many H-Block prisoners are serving time for actions they did not commit, they are in Long Kesh for their Republican views or simply for living on the wrong side of town.

There are many H-Block prisoners who are members of the national liberation forces. Every prisoner charged under the

emergency provisions is equally a prisoner of war, whether or not he or she has taken up a gun against their oppressors.

No socialist can deny the validity of anti-imperialist national liberation struggles, the struggle for the unity and self-determination of Ireland is focussed on the prisoners' demands. In England, we must pay particular attention to supporting the Irish struggle. It is urgent that every socialist takes up the cause of the

hunger strikers, and do so in unity with others - whatever other differences we may have.

We urge our readers to initiate and support local activities publicising the case of the prisoners. Existing local organisations such as the Troops Out Movement and Charter 80 are the springboards for such solidarity; this activity must include mobilising for the demonstrations on 15 November and 7 December.

POLICE CRACKDOWN ON CAMDEN PICKETS

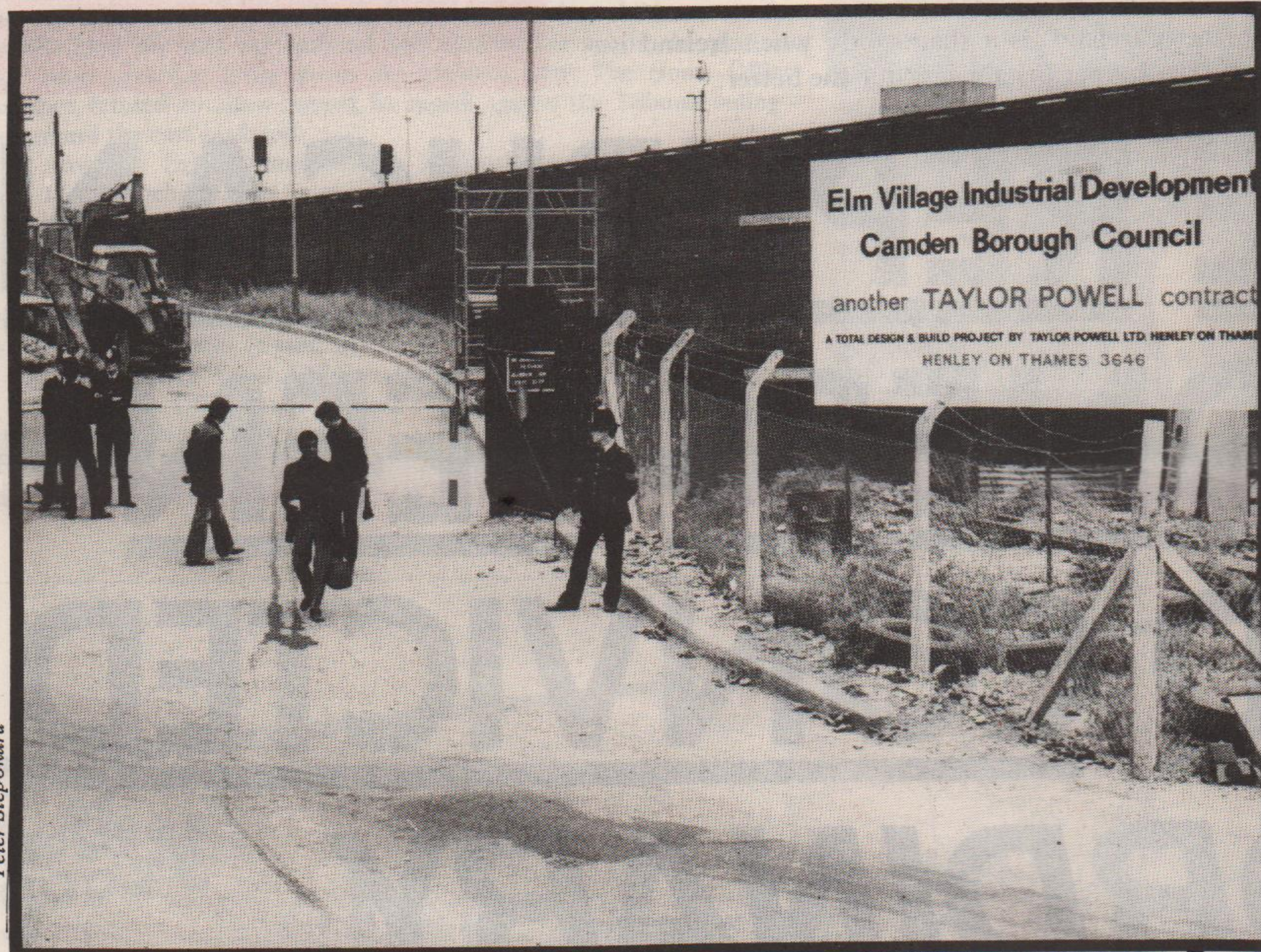
For the past two months, 14 members of UCATT (the building workers' union) have been on strike at the Taylor Powell site on Canley St./St. Pancras Way (London) after the employer refused to recognize their union membership. The 14 were threatened that if they joined a union, they would have their wages cut

to the tune of £35 a week, and have since seen their work taken over by non-union labour.

The police have established a permanent presence on the gate (in numbers of anything up to 300) and have included the SPG. They have seriously harassed the strikers and limited picketing to one

picket per gate.

A mass picket and demonstration has been called for 10 November, starting from Midland Road, NW1 (behind and north of St Pancras Station) at 7am in the morning. Big Flame readers in the London area are urged to attend this picket.



Peter Slepokaru

PUTTING THE CASE FOR COMBINES

AFTER YEARS OF trade union leaders participating (i.e., having

chats) with government, shop-floor organisation is poorly prepared to cope with the current attacks by management backed up by 'public opinion'. It is clear that if shop-floor organisation is to be re-built it will be from the base up. An important new pamphlet, *The Case for Multi-Union Combine Shop Stewards Committees*, brings together the experiences of the shop-stewards of seven major trans-national corporations. It coherently makes the point that single-plant, single-union organisation will increasingly be at a disadvantage as corporations become increasingly multi-plant and international.

All the same, the writers of the

TRADE UNION STRATEGY IN THE FACE OF CORPORATE POWER

The case for Multi-Union Combine Shop Stewards Committees

British Aerospace Joint Shop Stewards' Committee (Dynamics Group)
Quintessence National Shop Stewards' Committee
Lunar Aerospace Shop Stewards' Committee
Metal Box National Combine Committee
Power Engineering Trade Union Committee
Thames/EMI Combine Shop Stewards' Committee
Vickers' Combine Committee

pamphlet realise that the more plants stewards committees include, the greater is the danger that they will lose contact with the rank and file.

The committees that produced the pamphlet meet regularly (the next meeting is on Dec. 2nd) and shop stewards committees wishing to get in touch with them should contact:

Ron Mills,
163, Ulverley Green Road.
Olton,
Solihull,
West Midlands

from whom copies of the pamphlet can be obtained (25p + 15p postage).

LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISTS TO FUSE WITH BIG FLAME

LCG letter

At a Special National Conference on 25th October the Libertarian Communist Group (LCG) voted to seek immediate fusion with Big Flame. This statement is intended to give a brief outline of our reasons for this decision, and to try and indicate something of the politics we hope to bring to Big Flame.

The LCG was a very small organisation. Our members were scattered geographically and had numerous commitments outside of the group. Consequently it was proving increasingly impossible to secure through our group many of the benefits revolutionaries seek through their organisations. We were faced, in effect, with a failure to develop any form of meaningful collective practice, and could not get the sort of support and advice we needed in order to best translate our political ideas into creative reality.



Politically, we have over the past two years developed a sharper awareness of the need for greater organisational unity of revolutionary socialists. Big Flame appears to us a group with a similar concern. There are also numerous areas in which we feel we have developed considerable similarities with the policies presented by Big Flame. Big Flame have a fine record on the question of internal democracy, and extend this to their wider relations within the labour movement and in political campaigns. We are encouraged by their attitude to feminism and autonomous movements in general, and also by their record in anti-imperialist struggles. Some of our members, for instance, have established a good working relationship with Big Flame comrades in work over Ireland. We also feel that there are sympathetic elements in Big Flame's attitude to 'mass work' and in their desire to develop open anti-capitalist politics.

Fusion with Big Flame appealed to us therefore because we felt that it would help develop both our everyday practice as militants and the growth of the political ideas which we regard as being most important.



In Big Flame we hope to find a revolutionary organisation that is open and non-sectarian. We feel, of course, that we would bring to them aspects of our own tradition which we hope will stimulate debate within Big Flame. As Libertarian Communists, emerging from the anarchist movement our over-riding concern has been with the dangers of bureaucratic tyranny in socialism and with the extent to which this danger is a germ carried by revolutionaries themselves - in their ideas of political and economic revolution. We hope, therefore, that we would bring to BF distinctive positions on the question of the relations between socialist organisations and the working-class. We also have more immediate concerns which we would like to see BF debate. These include such problems as developing a response to the growing support for the Left Labour Alternative Economic Strategy.

The majority to approach BF was substantial but there were dissenters. We intend to pass some of our resources to these comrades to enable them to establish a libertarian socialist journal. They hope to make this a forum for those of all poles sympathetic to libertarian ideas and interested in the specific task of developing them. We wish them well in this enterprise and hope it will prove of interest as an exercise in drawing people from across party boundaries into a common project of political debate and clarification.

BF's reply

BF's National Committee welcomes the LCG's offer of fusion. For us, the LCG has kept alive a tradition of libertarian communism that is an essential part of that revolutionary tradition that we are part of. It is of great value, that in a period of retreat and disillusionment on the left, two groups are coming together - we are sure that the whole we form will become greater than the sum of its parts. The fusion with the LCG, to be ratified at next month's BF conference, is proof of the ability of revolutionaries with different perspectives to join forces. For sure, there will be political differences to debate with LCG comrades - there already are such differences inside BF! But we believe that given an engagement in working class struggle, it is possible to provide inside a revolutionary organisation an ongoing form in the debate, discussion and synthesis of different points of view. This belief is an essential part of BF's political project and of the socialist revolution we want to help bring about.

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Send to: BIG FLAME, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London E.C. 1.

GARDNERS SHOW THE WAY

A FULL-TIME OCCUPATION



L. GARDNER & SONS Ltd. is an engineering firm near Manchester. Gardner's is part of the multinational Hawker-Siddeley Group, and is noted for producing the 'Rolls Royce' of diesel engines. While most other engineering firms are doing badly, Hawker-Siddeley announced profits of £57.2 million for the first six months of 1980—£4.1 million higher than in 1979. They also made another £1.6 million in interest on bank deposits.

REDUNDANCIES

Earlier this year the unions put in a 20% pay claim. The employer's answer was that in order to keep the firm viable they would pay 5%, make 700 workers redundant out

of a work force of 2500, introduce a new piece work system and demand flexibility of labour. The unions agreed that the company had a problem and to avoid redundancies

suggested work sharing and also that the company apply for the government short-time working compensation scheme (STEP), which lasts for 13 weeks. However, the company decided this was too messy and at a meeting in August informed the works committee that it intended to make 700 forced redundancies, later reduced to 590.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Gardners management have clearly decided that this is the time to restructure the work force. They were immovable, refusing to consider work sharing, voluntary redundancies, or early retirement. They expected the work force to take whatever they dished out. They were wrong—the workers said, 'Enough is enough!' and occupied the factory: one of the biggest fight-backs against redundancies under the Tories.

Employers in the engineering industry are holding back and watching. If Gardners workers lose, they will have beaten the CONFED and they will move in. Workers need this victory if the present scale of redundancies is to be stopped.

ORGANISATION OF THE SIT-IN

2000 white-collar and manual workers are in dispute. Five hundred white-collar workers are not supporting the dispute in defiance of their union and are still being paid. All 11 unions on site have now made the dispute official.

The workers secured the factory and organised themselves to give the police no reason to evict them.

This entails keeping the place clean, secure, heated for certain periods, etc. The workers have organised themselves into seven committees: finance, transport, publicity, printing, gate, canteen, and social. They are now in the fourth week of occupation and things are beginning to take shape and become effective.

There are stewards' meetings but no mass meetings, although a lot of emphasis is put on involving more workers in the dispute. Workers get free food if they come to the sit-in. Newsletters are distributed and letters are sent out to all the workers keeping them up to date.

The support the workers are receiving is very good and is growing. The miners have given a lot of

financial support. *Gardners workers will come to speak at meetings anywhere if invited.*

SOCIAL SECURITY

Strike pay averages £9 per week and the majority of workers haven't started to receive it yet. Social Security officials have blocked the workers getting money in every way possible. They tried to implement the Social Security Act 1980, although this does not take effect until Nov. 24. They were reducing benefit by £12. Luckily the workers got inside expert advice, so they have stopped that trick. But even after taking on the SS, the most people get is £2 to £4 for dependents. Money and food parcels to support the strike are essential.

broken down. The women are mostly involved in the canteen committee, organising the feeding of the strikers. Some are on the publicity and printing committees. As one striker explained, 'Margaret, an AUEW shop steward, walks into the room where men are organising mailouts to the cry of "where's the tea, Margaret?"'

The wives organised a picket in support of the dispute two weeks ago which was well-supported and reported on regional TV news. But this has not been a priority in the dispute. The problem is child care: there is no creche, and therefore the women have limited time. They've planned a bonfire night social at the local Labour Club for



MANAGEMENT TACTICS

Management have embarked on a massive campaign.

They have written to all workers identifying those who are being made redundant, and appealing to the remainder not to support the strike. Among those to go are a number of leading stewards, including the convenor. Management are now attempting to involve the workers in a secret ballot, again writing to their homes. The local press has worked actively against the dispute, despite a favourable report in the *Daily Mirror* in late October.

WOMEN WORKERS

Four hundred women work at Gardners, mostly in the offices and foundry. A lot of the office staff are not supporting the dispute. There are a few women stewards. Gender roles are not automatically

the families of Gardners strikers. Then, one Saturday in early November, they're planning along with the local Women's Voice group to dress up in 1930's-style clothes and give out leaflets in the shopping centre. All these activities are aimed at drawing as many women as possible into supporting the strike.

IMPLICATION

The Gardners workers have a good record in supporting other workers in dispute. Their strike must win. They will be playing a major part in the March Against Unemployment in Liverpool on Nov. 29th. Send money, food parcels, messages of support to:

Dave Marsden
Treasurer CSEU Strike Committee
187 Barton Lane,
Eccles
Manchester M30 0HN

KING HENRY'S CALL FOR MASS PICKET

AS THE KING Henry's Pies union recognition dispute (see BF, Aug., Sept., Oct.) enters its fifth month, the strikers' pressure is piling up on the company. Hollins, the managing director, is having to pay through the nose to get scab driver supplies of flour and fuel to keep production sputtering along. But hopefully these sources will soon be stopped. In the courts, the company was recently found guilty in two prosecutions brought by the Health and Safety Executive and fined £500. In one of these incidents a woman lost two fingers in an unsafe machine. Four more court cases against the company are still outstanding, including one for employing child labour.

Last month we reported on the production of a video film about the strike. This is currently being shown in local pubs and clubs with great success. One pub has asked for a repeat showing with a larger and louder TV to enable more peo-

ple to see it.

But still, your help is desperately needed to enable the strikers to win their final victory, particularly on the **MASS PICKET** on Friday, November 7th, at 7.00 am.

Other things you can do:

1. Book the video film and a speaker from the strike to show in your local pub, union branch, etc.
2. Find out where King Henry's pies are being sold (mostly to institutions, like colleges) and get them to switch suppliers.

3. Support the picket at Crown Court on December 11th, when the arrested pickets appear on obstruction and breach of the peace charges.

Donations and requests for the film to: **Bakers' Union, Room 4, George House, 30 Dudley Rd., Whalley Range, Manchester 16.**

Picket at Ravenoak Rd., off Broom Lane, Levenshulme.

Guy Lewis



ALTERNATIVE PLANS:

ALTERNATIVE PLANS have become an increasingly common feature of discussions about fighting redundancies. The Lucas stewards kicked off with their now famous and inspiring *corporate plan* for socially useful products as an alternative to military production. But the Lucas combine committee was the first to admit that workers' plans could never be a substitute for shop floor militancy, and that there could be no 'islands of responsibility in a sea of depravity'. The Lucas experiment also distinguished itself by its widespread involvement of

both shop floor and technician workers in the early stages, and imaginative follow-ups, including the building of prototype alternative products. Other plans have fallen short of these achievements and have, for that reason, been far less useful. The steel industry provides a useful case study.

The Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC), the major steel production workers' union, has recently brought out its alternative strategy for the steel industry, *New Deal for Steel*. The union published its book, because of the British

Steel Corporation's 'refusal to consult', and argues the case that 'BSC's current closure programme is totally unnecessary....British Steel can cut prices, halt closures, make profits and grow'.

PROPAGANDA NOT ENOUGH

Unfortunately, *New Deal for Steel*, after telling its readers how 'the corporation were only going through the motions of listening to our views', is not very convincing about how the BSC will be made to

listen any more attentively to this particular plan. If only publicity for a set of proposals were sufficient to guarantee their acceptance!

The missing ingredient for me, in what in other ways is a very useful book, was the potential of the power, organisation and imagination of steel workers themselves to transform and run the industry. And maybe this is one reason why the book has received such an apathetic response from many of the steel works and communities (only two follow-up meetings have been organised to date—both in South Yorkshire). The strike earlier this year unearthed a great capacity for organisation and initiative amongst the membership of the steel unions. Had that power been harnessed to a struggle against redundancies—if, for example, 'Consett had been occupied and the South Wales works backed in their opposition to cuts at Port Talbot and Llanwern—then the picture might have been very different today.

LOUSY MANAGEMENT

New Deal for Steel provides a devastating analysis of the shortcomings of BSC management, of the myths about steel demand, wage costs and productivity perpetrated by that management, and of the disastrous consequences of the current BSC strategy. Unfortunately, this positive aspect is not matched by the ISTC's 'counter strategy'. Basically, the ISTC leadership argues for a new commercial policy (lower prices, more aggressive sales, improved quality and flexibility), backed up by a new management team, and bigger state subsidies. But in so doing, the ISTC ignores the possibilities of workers' control and fudges the issue of the political changes that would be necessary to run a nationalised industry along socialist lines.

NO COMMON INTEREST
The book's weaknesses on these points mean that dangerous con-

clusions could be drawn, notably that there is a common interest between BSC workers and management. By failing to challenge the whole concept of rationalisation BSC-style, the union is doing itself little good in the eyes of private sector workers who have, over the years, been understandably sceptical of the merits of state ownership. Furthermore, as a private sector convenor pointed out at a meeting in Stockbridge about the book, the *New Deal* has nothing to say about the threat of denationalisation of parts of BSC and how unity can be created both between unions and plants within BSC, and between BSC and private sector workers.

TRIPLE ALLIANCE

A genuine counter-planning initiative would have to involve the members in the plants themselves right from day one. ISTC members, whilst welcoming the arguments in *New Deal for Steel* for its usefulness in criticising management, will be rightly sceptical of their leaders' manoeuvrings. One way of opening up discussion and preparing for possible confrontations this winter would be to demand local meetings of rank and file delegates of the 'Triple Alliance', which the ISTC, NUR, and NUM have organised at national level. Counter-planning in the nationalised sector could then be discussed both in a broader context, and in a way that connects up with the real problems of everyday organising on the shop floor. Then workers could discuss the tactics needed to take on BSC and the Tories now, rather than waiting till the next general election.

Phil North (Sheffield BF)

New Deal for Steel, published by the ISTC, Swinton House, 324 Grays Inn Rd., London WC1B 8DD. Price £1.00.



THE STRUGGLES AT FIAT

THE LONGEST SLOGAN IN THE WORLD

A six week strike at the Fiat car works in Turin ended last month. The strike had begun in early September with the announcement by Fiat management of its intention to make 24,000 workers redundant by the end of 1980. It claimed it needed these redundancies because of a substantial reduction in the demand for cars — though it is also the case that the introduction of robots and other new technology in Fiat plants means that Fiat needs less workers for each car it manufactures. The unions who were in total opposition to the redundancies were able to organise a massive, militant campaign throughout the city of Turin which involved an overwhelming majority of working people of the town — who in one way or another are dependent on Fiat and its suppliers for jobs. And given that the Italian Communist Party (PCI) has now decided to abandon its policy of the 'historic compromise', the Party was able to encourage union resistance by promising support — though it was careful never to spell out in what form this support would be provided! In fact, so great was the fear of the employers and the government that the Fiat strike would provide a reference point for the development of a national working class resistance that they put a lot of pressure on Fiat management to accept union demands to convert the redundancies into lay-offs. Fiat management was forced to respond to the workers' demands for lay-offs instead of redundancies and the state has agreed to pay the laid-off workers 90% of their basic wage until the end of 1981. The victory is only a partial one for the workers — but at least it means that they have a year within which to organise against any attempt by management to re-convert the lay-offs into redundancies at the end of next year.

'At 2 o'clock one morning we were driving slowly round the road that skirted the outer wall of the FIAT-Mirafiori plant. In the road ahead we saw a group of about 20 young workers fanning across the road and flagging us down. Some were wearing blue overalls, some combat jackets — with pockets bulging ominously. It later turned out they were armed with rocks, and with stout short sticks. We thought we were in for trouble, but it turned out that they knew our driver. Their job, they explained, was to keep an eye out for any suspicious cars in the neighbourhood of the factory — fascists, maybe, or provocateurs — and God help them if they'd caught them.

They were also whiling away the night-time hours by painting a slogan around the outer factory wall, in red paint, in letters a yard and a half high. We thought that this was probably the longest slogan in the world. It read as follows: 'Marx was right — Socialism and Revolution (hammer and sickle);

Foreman and Company Guards — We've had enough of you; Giovanni Agnelli, we have warned you — no single redundancy will go unpunished; No to Sackings, No to Mobility — Romiti Watch Out!; No to Layoffs — Let's sack the Pig Employer; (hammer and sickle) We shall occupy the Factories and the City if there is a single Redundancy; Long Live Marx; Workers' Power — No Compromises; We want the sacked workers in the plant with us — 100% guaranteed wages for all workers; Pope Wojtyla is against Abortion because he wants a lot of men to fight the Imperialist War for the Multinationals; No Redundancies, No Mobility, No Lay-offs; Long Live Che Guevara! (hammer and sickle); We Want the Sacked Workers in the Factory With Us!'

We complimented the artist on his handiwork. He blushed politely, as he went off to wash the red paint off his hands.
(From a Big Flame member recently returned from Italy.)



THE NEW METRO — A SYMPHONY OF NONSENSE

TO THE rendering of 'Land of Hope and Glory', the new Mini Metro stands on the cliffs of Dover, repulsing the invasion of Datsuns, Renaults, Volkswagens and Fiats.

Behind this symphony of nonsense lies the following facts:

*The price of the Metro has been tens of thousands of jobs in every Leyland plant.

*Leyland workers last year got a 5% wage increase linked to an 84-page list of conditions.

*The new technology robots at Longbridge have been introduced without a single guarantee on jobs, conditions, control or even increased money.

*Whilst Longbridge convenor Jack Adams urges maximum co-operation with Metro management, his predecessor, Derek Robinson, has lost his case at an industrial tribunal.

*Members of the manual workers' Combine Committee have been threatened with disciplinary action for even attending combine meetings in work hours.

RESTLESS

Behind the Motor Show baloney and the talk of a 'new atmosphere in Leyland industrial relations', those who actually make (but afford to buy) Leyland cars are getting restless.

Leyland workers know that for the first time for several years they have some leverage as the Metro comes into production and Edwardes grovels to the Government for more money.

This has shown itself in staff reaction to the latest plan for 4300 sackings. There have been only 900

volunteers, with a deadline of 21st November for compulsory redundancies.

RANK AND FILE

Shop stewards representing the four unions involved have managed to get this date put back to January, and the threat of compulsory redundancies put off at least for the moment. Even this small success was only obtained by united staff action based on continual feedback to the membership, via leaflets and meetings, and a refusal to allow the full-time officials to dominate the negotiations.

At the same time, Leyland has made a total hush-up of the constant stoppages and sanctions at Longbridge (usually two or three a day, over the last couple of weeks) caused by changes in work practices.

Terry Duffy, AUEW President, had the cheek to warn that the AUEW would ignore staff picket lines and sanctions.

NO FUTURE

Leyland have deep long-term problems of survival. Despite all the Metro hogwash, production has dropped drastically this year. It is simply too small to compete with the Fords and Renaults. Edwardes talks of import controls, but the next new Leyland car is a joint Honda-Leyland model, the Bounty.

Leyland are moving towards decentralisation. The profitable Jaguar, Alvia, Climax, Rover, and Uni-part sections are likely to be hived off, leaving a Cowley/Longbridge complex that is unlikely to survive under the Edwardes Plan.

CHILDREN FIRST

A NEW CAMPAIGN

As the cuts in welfare expenditure increase, provision for state nurseries desperately needs defending. In this article, the recently formed National Childcare Campaign outlines its formation and its plans for the future. Support for the campaign should be a priority for all our readers.

Helping little children has always had a sentimental attraction. Even the Tories believe little children need help. 'Save the Children Fund' gave Mrs Thatcher a standing ovation when she came to their carol concert, and their publicity director is a Tory candidate. VOLCUP (Voluntary Organization Committee for Under Fives), chaired by Lady Plowden, is the Tory Government's white hope for co-ordinating action on pre-school provision — it even had the ear of the Labour government! In an influential new book, *Under Five in Britain*, an Oxford professor praises our voluntary organizations as offering the way forward in a time of crisis.



What do these voluntary organizations, in whose capable hands we can leave pre-school provision, believe? They believe, for the most part, that helping little children means helping 'the family' i.e. helping little children to stay at home with Mummy. They believe in a cosy rosy picture of family life, Janet playing with dolls and John with cars whilst Mummy, gently smiling, makes the semi nice and tidy for Daddy's evening homecoming. If Daddy is also nice and rich, like Mr Thatcher, Mummy can also have a Nanny to help her out a little bit, and make the rosy picture still rosier. As Robert Louis Stevenson wrote a century ago: *The child that is not clean and neat With lots of toys and things to eat He is a naughty child, I'm sure — Or else his dear papa is poor.*

DEMANDS ON WOMEN

What is the reality? Women are depressed staying at home, and working class women, with inadequate housing and low income, are even more depressed. Women don't want to stay at home. Or they think they ought to for the sake of the children, but get depressed, bored and frustrated. Or alternatively they have to go out to work, and are torn between the demands of employers who make no acknowledgement of parenthood, and the demands of their children who may be looked after very badly because there is no decent nursery provision. Either way women get caught out.

The evidence for all this is clear. Academic studies, medical evidence, local and national statistics, surveys conducted by popular women's magazines like *Woman* and *Woman's Own*, accounts by women themselves, all point to the general trend: women feel stuck at home. They may think they ought to put up with it but the majority, according to the evidence want more out of life than motherhood and domesticity.

What about the children? According to official dogma, young children are supposed to need their mothers, and it will damage them if their mothers aren't there. One-to-

one relationships are essential if children aren't going to grow up psychologically damaged. Or so says the DHSS, whose job it is to provide the nurseries. Nurseries are only for the kids of mothers (not fathers) who are so awful that the child has to be taken away. But most parents know that babies and toddlers love the company of other children. One-to-one relationship means one isolated little child with one isolated woman.

FOR PROPER PROVISION

The National Child Care Campaign has been set up to combat and argue against simplistic views of women and children. We want to campaign not only against cuts but for proper comprehensive community based nursery provision. We want to campaign for employers to make concessions to working parents, for proper sick pay, maternity leave and flexible hours. We want children to get a good deal, and we want the government to organize it, because like proper health care, or education, we don't think it can be done by a charity or privately by the people who can afford it.

What have we done so far? The National Campaign has grown out of the work of the London Nursery Campaign (LNC), which has been an umbrella organization for London groups since 1972. LNC has been involved in many local campaigns, published a booklet on community nurseries, and convened a working party to look at the NNEB qualification and training for under-fives workers. Its report has just been published.

The LNC convened the first National Child Care Conference on July 5th, when activists and trade unionists from all over the country came together to try to form the



Union Place Collective

the campaign. The initial programme of action included lobbying at the TUC, Labour and Tory Party conferences, and aims to provide platforms at all major women's events. A diary of action for the year is being worked out. The research group is intended to provide detailed information on child development / child care and has already had several requests for information, from academics. The admin group is handling affiliations, and is making a concerted effort to attract trade union support and membership; it is also looking into the possibility of permanent funding of a worker. The steering group are also publishing a booklet produced by an Oxford-based campaign, called *Campaigning Against the Cuts: how to defend your provision*.

AFFILIATE

It is not easy to build up muscle and staying power on a subject which the government and the press regard as an irrelevant little domestic affair, and of no real consequence. But, as we say in our leaflet, the National Child Care Campaign should say loud and clear



campaign. A steering group of 27 was elected, to produce a constitution and programme of action, to be presented at a further conference in January. The steering group also has the job of ensuring the campaign is properly nationally-based, and that some form of regional representation is worked out, so that London members do not dominate. It has set up an admin group, a research group and a press group to further the aims of

that women do work, need and want to work, and that child care facilities are absolutely necessary and central to women's equality. We are firmly convinced that state provision of an extensive but diverse and good quality childcare service would be of benefit to everyone — women, children and even men. So affiliate now!

National Child Care Campaign, c/o Surrey Docks Child Care Project, Docklands Settlement Redriff Road, London SE16.

CAMDEN CUTS CONFERENCE

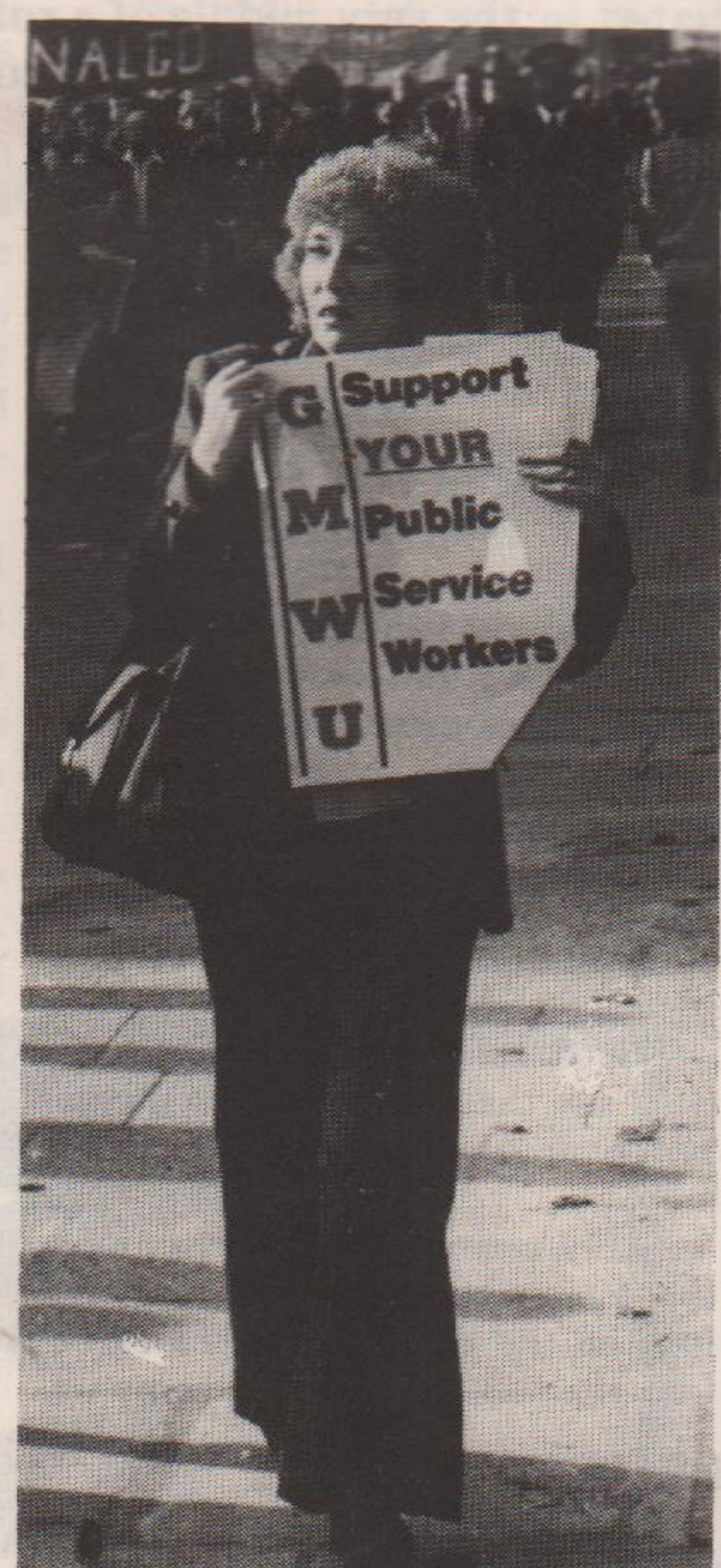
FIGHTING TALK: NOW FOR ACTION

Arriving at Camden Town Hall for the 'Local Government in Crisis' Conference on 1 November, I wasn't really quite sure what to expect. I knew already from debates in the Sheffield labour movement that there was plenty of feeling against the cuts and determination to do something — but precious little conception of how the confrontation with the Tories could be successfully conducted. Furthermore, just before the conference, several Labour groups who are supposedly leading lights in the anti-cuts movement had backed down on council house sales — including Lambeth, sponsors of the conference.

Lots of us were looking for a lead at Camden — but I came away with mixed feelings. There were some very positive features: a good cross-section of about 400 delegates from unions and Labour parties; some pretty useful discussion on the pros and cons of various strategies; good news of NALGO members in several cities refusing to administer council house sales (and at least two councils — Bradford and Merthyr — themselves not selling); a decent creche (a pleasant change!); and some strongly-worded amendments inserted into Lambeth's draft conference statement. We left having pledged ourselves to fight, amongst other things, for 'all-out strikes and occupations... as soon as any Labour council faces commissioners, or is surcharged for taking a stand against the cuts', non-cooperation with any cuts, 'no rent or rate rises to compensate for government cuts', and industrial action against redundancies.

However, I was disappointed at the lack of discussion on how we can win support for such action and policies amongst our members, in the communities and from private sector workers. Also it's still not clear what will happen if councils do refuse to make cuts. A series of workshops where we could get behind the rhetoric might have helped.

One thing does seem clear — that is that every cut, every sold council house, and every lost job which we let through will make it harder to convince trade unionists and the public to support action against the Tories. If the Steering Committee elected from the Conference can publicise action being taken so we can give



Union Place Collective

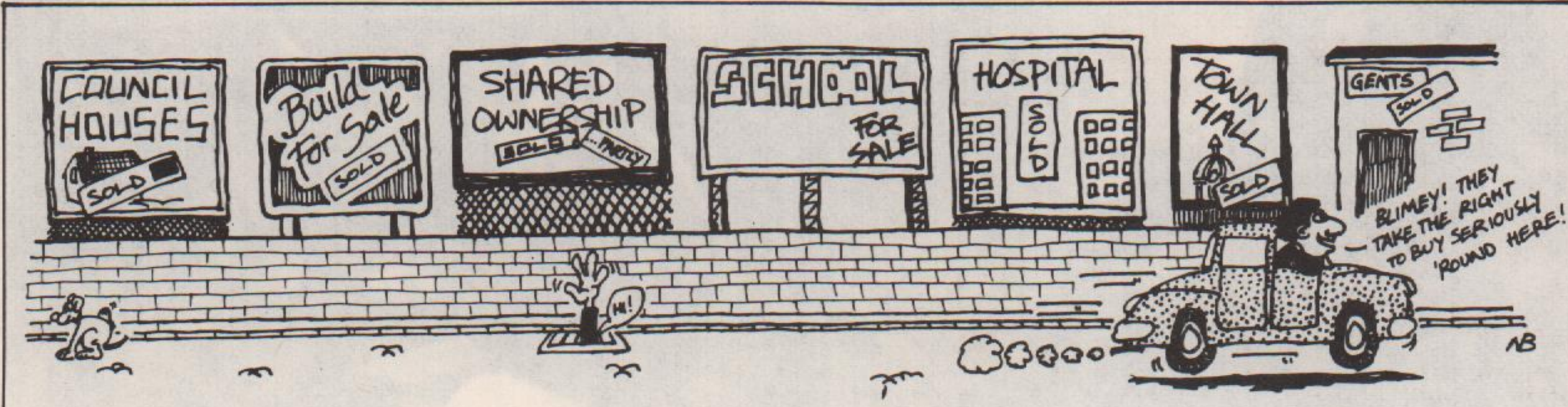
it maximum support, and start to coordinate a national campaign against cuts which is not dependent on the Labour Party or TUC, the Conference will have done a good job in helping to overcome the isolation and demoralisation which many public sector workers now feel. At the local level, one of the best ideas from the conference was to set up action committees of all local authority unions in each district, county or borough.

NATFHE delegate (Sheffield)

Full details of the resolution passed and the Steering Committee should hopefully be available from the Organising Committee, Room 103, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London SW2 1RW.

Mr Nasty himself, Michael Heseltine, has announced a total stop on all new building and a total stop on money available for rehabilitation work on housing all over the country. This follows cuts representing more than 80% of government spending cuts to date. The effect on housing stock will be disastrous. All the nightmare predictions of thousands more homeless and yet more thousands living in slum conditions are being realized.

In this context the iniquitous policy of selling off council houses can be seen clearly for what it is: a blatant piece of asset stripping that will condemn many thousands of council tenants to misery; a deliberate policy aimed at gaining a clear political victory over working-class people. The articles on this page look at reactions to Tory policy, and the beginnings of an organised fightback.



Kilner House Occupation:

DON'T LET HOUSES ROT - SQUAT!

With this slogan about 100 people turned up at the High Court in the Strand to demonstrate their support for the Kilner House Squatters when they appeared there recently as orders for possession for the flats they were occupying were read out in court. 60 families had occupied the block, situated in the very middle of a run-down estate in Kennington Park Road, London, when the Greater London Council (GLC) had suddenly announced that these flats were now for sale.

The GLC had previously emptied the block for modernisation, promising the tenants that they would be able to return as soon as the block was refurbished. The Council then decided to sell the flats after 'a small amount of money had been spent on the properties to make them saleable' (quote from GLC council document). This small amount turned out to include new windows and frames, plus complete redecoration of the flats' interior, in addition to the new central heating system, kitchen and bath units, and separate washrooms. This is far in excess of the GLC's modernisation programme as designed for its rent-paying tenants, which is at present frozen as the GLC say they haven't enough money to do this type of work anymore.

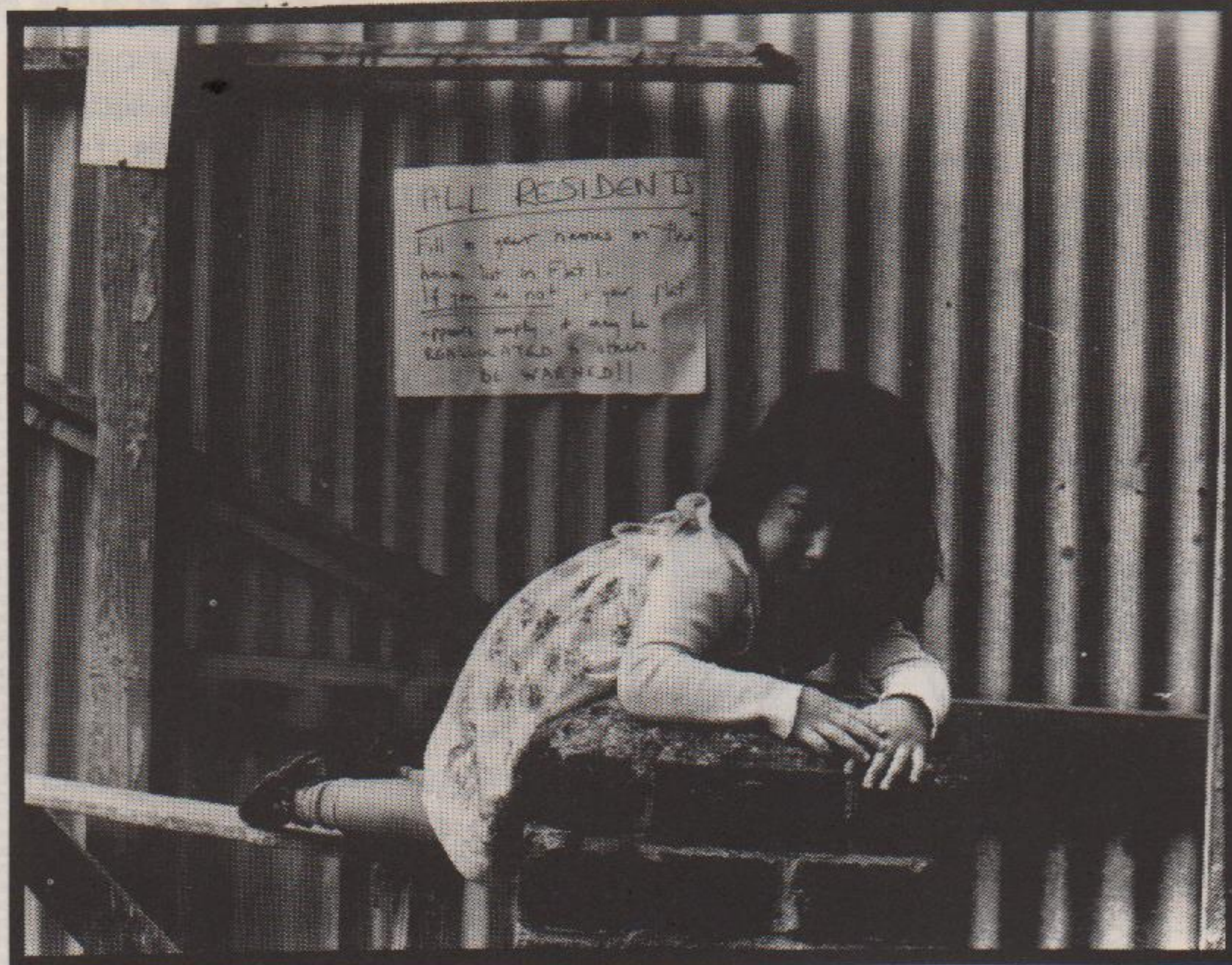
Many tenants from the Kennington Park Estate were also offered flats on the Kilner House block before the 'sell it' decision came up.

RESPONSE

The Tenants Association on the Estate immediately called a picket of the block, to advertise their opposition. They then hit on the scheme of squatting the block, and called in the London Squatters Union. Together they occupied it, and brought in homeless families from the local area to live there. Single people were also offered homes. Quickly the block was filled with the exception of a few houses.

NEWS SPREADS

News spread very fast. The squatters were well-organised enough to make the most of the opportunity, and spent nearly the whole of the first week visiting places and gaining support from a wide variety of sections. The London Tenants Organisation sent its banner and £100. Next on the list was the local branch of the builders union UCATT, who did the works for the flats and the Estate. When I spoke to the shop steward there, he said: 'When I heard that Kilner House had been squat-



ted, I really leapt for joy. It couldn't have come at a better time for us. We've been trying to find a way of getting at that block for ages while contractors have been hired to do the work. Now we've blacked everything that moves as far as Kilner House is concerned.' The blacking came just in time as the GLC had already issued instructions to board up the flats. This never happened.

Support was also gained from Lambeth Council, into whose area they came, from the Greater London Association of Trades Councils, and from GLC NALGO, who refused to cooperate with the sales policy.

THE FUTURE

While for some of the occupants of Kilner House the future will mean eviction, many of them are likely to resist unless they are guaranteed rehousing first. In the meantime, the others have said they will occupy elsewhere. In reply the GLC have announced a one million pound exercise to up security on their sites, including dogs, stronger fences, etc. One person in the Kilner squat said, 'Well, that just increases the challenge, doesn't it?'

So we shall see.

The court case has been delayed. The GLC will have to seek separate orders on every tenant, which will take time. Meanwhile, the LEB workmen have refused to disconnect the electric supply, though the Board is still demanding big sums of money for electric connections to be made.

LIFE ON THE SQUAT

Collective forms of living have evolved during the occupation. Milk is bought communally, and in some parts of the block people are sharing expenses. In other parts families who have suffered from long isolation are finding it more difficult to adjust to the carnival-like atmosphere at times and prefer to live more quietly by themselves, not actively taking part in the internal organisation of the squat. One of these told BF that they felt that the place was indeed like one big family, and though some people were rather odd, they were all really nice people.

Weekly meetings are held to discuss all the internal problems of organising. These deal with who lives where, the many odd jobs that

HOUSING

GAINING STRENGTH THROUGH ACTION

The NHLC (National Housing Liason Committee) National Conference was an exciting affair with delegates from all over the country. Tenants formed the largest group, and there were representatives from Community Centres, Women's Aid Centres, Housing Aid Workers, Trade Unions and many others involved in work around housing.

What made the meeting special was the way people told of their experiences and the direct action they had taken aimed at changing policy. Tenants, including many women, spoke well and had clearly enjoyed taking part in events they had planned. Despite a certain shyness, and even doubts about doing 'such things', they spoke of the strength they gained through their actions. Some were able to speak of successes in winning cash injections or rehousing for many people.

Workshops were also lively, with some in-depth analysis of the weakness of depending on the Labour Party (or anyone else) and the need to build the strength and confidence of local groups who are already organising around these problems. To this end the group came up with a 12 point plan of action:

1. Support Liverpool tenants on the Liverpool demo - Nov. 29, and march on housing issues.

2. 'Single Issue' campaigns to attract attention to Housing as an issue.

3. Support each other with group visits to be arranged.

4. Education kits on organising to be based on actions so far.

5. A national petition to be arranged.

6. A Day of Action in the 1981 in London, based around the work of a local campaign.

7. Planning and discussions on tenant/union relations.

8. A 2 year programme of action to be drawn up.

9. Discussions on working with Labour Councillors.

10. Squatting as a form of action.

11. Court action - when and how can it be useful?

12. Arrange another National Conference on Jan. 31, 1981, in Birmingham.

To contact the NHLC: Bob Dumbleton, 35 Derri Rd., Penylan, Cardiff.

need doing and the problems with gas and electric officials. So far the GLC heavy mob haven't shown up and resistance was strong enough to prevent an attempt by the police to enter on the first night, since which time no further attempt has been made. Money is desperately needed. It can be sent to: LONDON SQUATTERS UNION (KILNER HOUSE), PEGASUS PLACE, LONDON S.E.11.

SPREADING THE TACTICS

Since the success of the Kilner House Squat, others have been following suit, and groups in London are currently planning to get together to occupy other GLC flats for sale in other areas. In Southwark the Council's present policy of selling houses that were empty, awaiting rehabilitation, may be extended to include whole blocks of flats as well. If this happens, there is likely to be a huge surge of resistance to any such efforts by the Council from a wide circle of people, following the Kilner House example.

STRENGTHS OF THE ACTION

The action has been strong because they realised straight away the importance of maximising solidarity with their action, and because they were able to appeal to groups who already had an interest in taking on the struggle (cf the UCATT position re contractors and how that helped). The value of getting out, and being invited out to speak to a wide section of other groups to generate support for their action has also been a great source of strength. This strength can still be built on further to assist

Unions join in

Lambeth NALGO (Housing) has blacked all work on Council House sales and have been followed into the fray by Southwark and GLC NALGO branches. They have all been supported by tenants and this defiance of the law is a courageous attempt to break up the Tory offensive and desperately needs the support of all sectors. Other NALGO branches to join in at going to press were: London Borough of Camden, Islington, Lewisham and Hackney, Sheffield, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Coventry, East Lothian, Motherwell and Dundee, and Bradford Council have banned all sales of houses following from the moratorium announcement.

in preventing evictions, and in gaining rehousing for those who are evicted.

The other strength has been the effectiveness of the tactic in rehousing homeless people, many of whom the blocks were originally intended for, while throwing a very effective spoke in the wheel of the GLC sales machine. As an effective action it could yet be the start of a more general campaign to prevent the sale of council houses, and turn back the tide on one of the worst aspects of current housing policy.

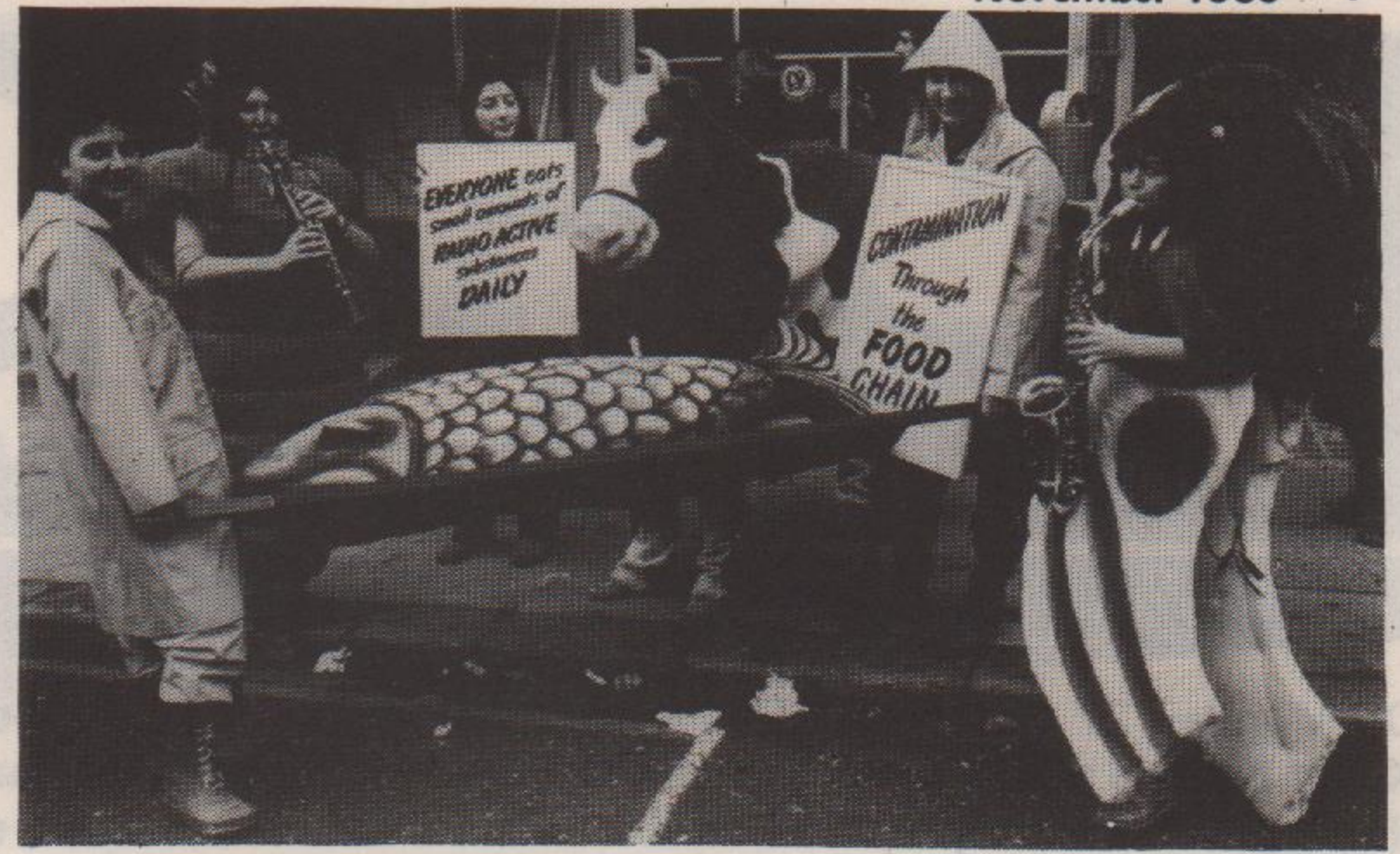
TOM CLARKE (South London Big Flame)

It was heartening to see 100,000 people ranged against the cruise missiles in October's 'Protest and Survive' march in London. As our pictures show, the event passed off with much energy and imagination. But what a lot of people have been saying, is 'well that was good — now what happens.'

For all the wide range of groups and alliances that were there on the day, it was disappointing to see a rather small turnout from the larger trade unions. But, as our article on the closure of 22 conventional power plants shows, it is their jobs and their rights as trade unionists which are being put in the front line of the mad Tory dash to an ever-expanding nuclear programme.

Also notably absent from the march was an international perspective. The crucial role that trade unionists have to play is also pointed to in the article on Brazil's sinister attempts to join the Nuclear Club.

We hope that both articles will complement the arguments put forward in October's *Big Flame* that 'the politics of peace is not enough' and help to persuade even more people that a fight against nuclear weapons and nuclear proliferation cannot and will not be effective unless it is located in concrete anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist forms of organisation and action.



Ian McIntosh

POWER: JOBS UNDER ATTACK

3,000 power workers are to lose their jobs following a decision by the CEGB (Central Electricity Generating Board) to close 22 power stations 'because of an unprecedented fall in electricity demand'. The stations are in Bankside, Croydon, Blackwell Point, Barking, Tilbury and Littlebrook in London; Dunston on Tyneside, Huddersfield and Mexborough in Yorkshire; Lister Drive, Fleetwood and Bold A in Lancashire; Bromborough and Ince in Cheshire; Hams Hall B in the Midlands; Nottingham HP and LP; Ashford, Kent; Little Barford, Bedfordshire, Uskmouth and Aborthow in Wales and Plymouth.

This comes a mere eleven months after the Tories' decision to spend at least £20,000,000,000 between 1982 and 1992 on ten pressurised water reactors of similar design to the disaster-prone reactor at Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania. Tory Energy Secretary said in Parliament on 18th December 1979 that this colossal programme was based on advice from the 'electricity supply industry' using 'cautious assumptions' as to electricity demand. This self-same 'electricity supply industry' derives its profits from equipping the nuclear programme and has therefore been responsible for pushing estimates for electricity demand high on the basis of two untenable propositions, first that energy growth must be tied to economic growth and second that future growth will be roughly exponential.

Now that the recession has hit the second proposition for six, it is workers who suffer and not the 'electricity supply industry'. There has been no announcement of a curtailment of the nuclear programme, in spite of cuts in every other conceivable area of government expenditure other than

defence and law and order. This may be because as the leaked Tory Cabinet minutes of 25th October 1979 revealed, 'A nuclear programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial proportion of electricity production from the dangers of disruption by coal miners or transport workers' and 12 of the power stations to be closed are coal fired and dependent on coal miners and transport workers for their operation.

Mr John Edmonds, national energy officer of the GMWU which represents more than half the workers concerned said it was not necessary for so many plants to close. 'It's three to four times larger than we expected and there won't even be any great saving to begin with.' He predicted a 'long hard struggle' over the closures. During the next two years three big nuclear power stations — Dungeness B, Hartlepool and Heysham are scheduled to come into operation although they have been considerably delayed.

For further information contact: Trade Union Group, Anti-Nuclear Campaign, 256 Battersea Park Rd., London SW11. Tel: 01-223 9115.



Ian McIntosh

WEAPONS: TRANSPORT WORKERS KEY ROLE

After the euphoria of the Anti-Cruise Missiles march, back to the harsh realities of nuclear capitalism and its continual efforts to expand the nuclear 'market'. A deal struck between the West German and Brazilian governments threatens to extend still further the list of countries with nuclear weapon 'strike' potential and British workers are in a key position to determine whether or not the threat becomes a reality.

NO SECRET

Brazil has never made any secret of the fact that it intends to acquire nuclear explosive devices. As far back as the 1950s Brazil was contacting West German atomic bomb scientists and technicians to try to acquire the appropriate technology and, even more significantly, has never signed the Non Proliferation Treaty which was designed to ensure that civil nuclear technology (e.g. power plants and the like) was not used to make weapons.

The basic deal struck with the West Germans (and backed by a billion dollar loan from a consortium of West German banks) gives the Brazilian Government almost all the nuclear 'fuel cycle' technology it wants in return for Brazilian uranium. The Germans' commitment includes uranium exploration and mining, the building of a nuclear enrichment plant, fuel fabrication plant, 3 pressurized-water type power plants, and a reprocessing plant for the extraction of plutonium.

DUTCH OPPOSITION

The one crucial part that is missing from the deal so far, and that makes all the difference between nuclear independence and a more restrictive dependence on countries such as the USA is the initial charge of enriched fuel that is required to start up the reactors and thus, the whole weapons manufacture cycle. This is what URENCO (the British / German / Dutch uranium enrichment consortium) has agreed to supply, either from its Almelo plant in the Netherlands or from Capenhurst,

Cheshire, in this country. Already the plan has met considerable opposition from the Dutch, whose government has been forced to press the Brazilians for more safeguards over possible misuse of the uranium. But the British and German governments have refused to support this position. On the

enrichment contracts. Problems of misuse of the technology or material, they said, was 'for the politicians'.

T.U. ACTION VITAL

A combination of this sort of attitude and the strength of the opposition in the Netherlands make it more and more likely that URENCO will attempt to ship fuel from Capenhurst. The small demonstrations that have so far taken place in this country have been largely ineffective, and given the entrenched attitudes of the British Government even a vigorous campaign at this stage would probably be far too late to stop the contract.

DEMONSTRATE TO

*END IMPORT OF NAMIBIAN URANIUM

*NO NUCLEAR COLLABORATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 8th 1980

ASSEMBLE: PRESTON POLYTECHNIC CAR PARK,
FYLDE ROAD, PRESTON, 12 NOON

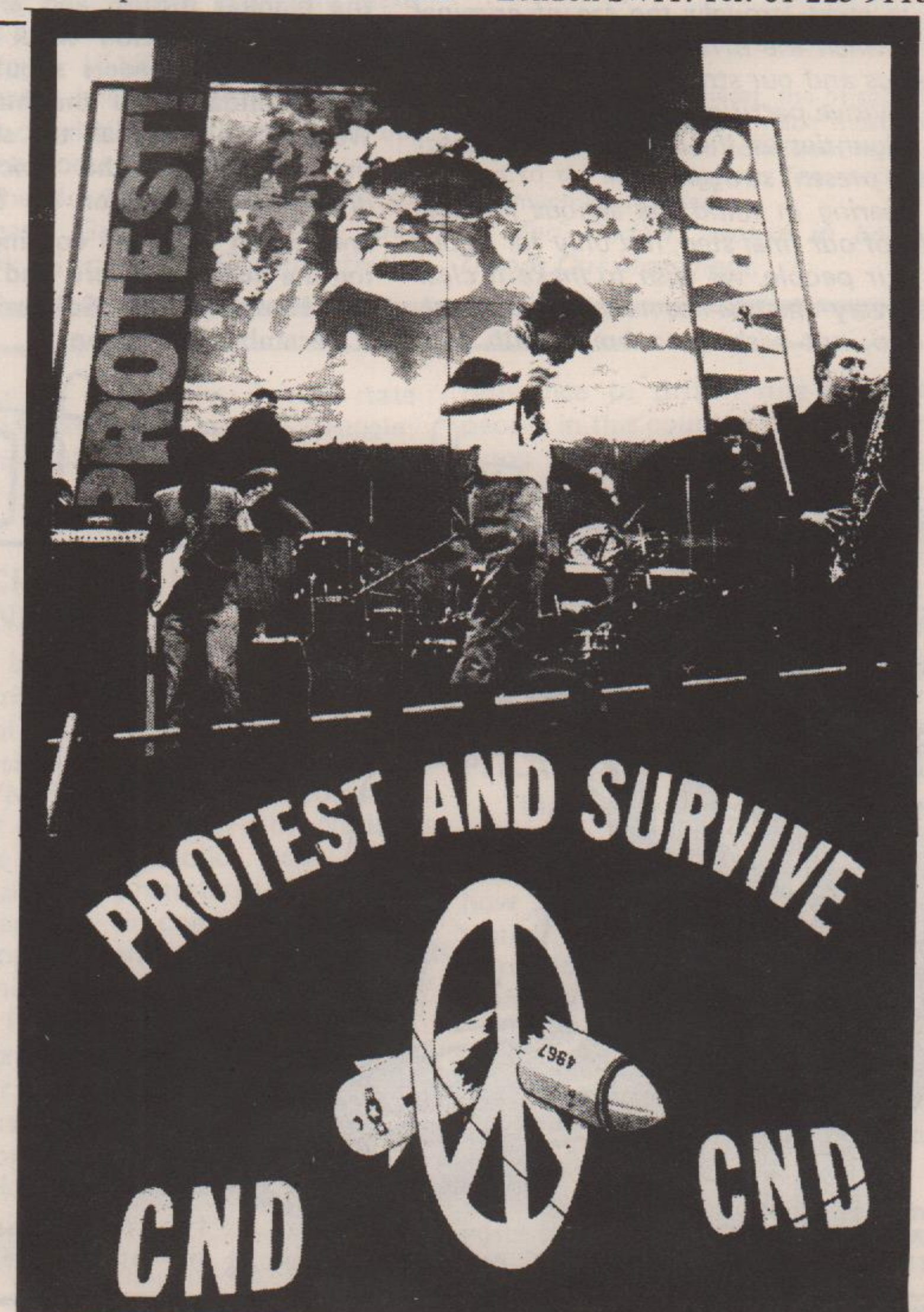
MARCH TO BRITISH NUCLEAR FUELS Ltd., SALWICK, PRESTON
RALLY TO FOLLOW MARCH

Called by North West Trade Union Anti-Apartheid Liaison Committee
Namibia Support Committee
Anti-Apartheid Movement

contrary, they have made every effort to force the Dutch to soften their stand and have even threatened to close off the Dutch interest in URENCO altogether. If there continue to be problems with the future supply of fuel from Almelo 'We'll send it from Capenhurst' (URENCO Finance Director Rooke). In discussion between representatives of the Anti-Nuclear Campaign and URENCO's UK management, the latter stressed that their role was to be 'competitive' in the world market for

In this context, the only effective course of action left is the systematic blacking of the fuel initiated by docks shop stewards committees, rail, air and sea freight workers, trades councils in affected areas and links between British, German and Dutch trade unions. The support of the TGWU in such action is the most vital of all.

For more information contact: Anti-Nuclear Campaign, Trade Union Group, 256 Battersea Park Road, London SW11. Tel: 01-223 9115.



Peter Anderson (New Musical Express)

PRISONER

On Monday 27 October, 7 Republican prisoners in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh, outside Belfast, began a hunger strike. There is not question that these prisoners are prepared to die unless their demands are met in full.

Special Category status, as it was known, was conceded to Republican prisoners in 1972, but only when hunger strikers in jail, supported by thousands taking action on the streets, were close to death. It was the withdrawal of this agreement in 1976 which created the conditions for the H-Block blanket protest which began in September 1976 when the

men in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh Prison refused to wear prison clothes or do prison work. The authorities retaliated by taking away all their clothing, and all the cell furniture except for a mattress on floor. They had only their blankets for covering. All remission was taken away and they were kept in cells where the lights were on 24 hours a day. They were denied all recreation, all access to radio, TV, books, newspapers, magazines, writing materials. They could only receive visits if they put on the prison uniform.

THE DIRTY PROTEST

After 17 months of this almost total deprivation the prisoners started the 'dirty protest'. Contrary to the reports in the press, this was not self-inflicted, but was the result of further provocations: The authorities refused to allow the prisoners to go to the toilets unless they wore prison uniform. Loyalist orderlies, who were then given the work of emptying the toilet vessels began deliberately to topple the pots over the cells. The prison officers then joined in the tactic. When the warders began to empty the toilet pots on the mattresses, the prisoners resorted to ridding of the contents by smearing the walls.

Other conditions - obviously not self-inflicted - not mentioned by the press are the constant harassments, searching of intimate parts of the body, and beatings suffered by the prisoners.

HUNGER STRIKE

A smuggled communication issued by the Blanketmen P.R.O. on October 10, declared:

'We, the Republican Prisoners of War in H-Block, Long Kesh demand as of right political recognition and that we be accorded the status of political prisoners. We claim this right as captured combatants in the continuing struggle for National liberation and self-determination. We refute most strongly the tag of criminal with which the British have attempted to label us and our struggle, and we point to the divisive partitionist institutions of the Six Counties as the sole criminal aspect of the present struggle...'

'Bearing in mind the serious implications of our final step, not only for us but for our people, we wish to make it clear that every channel has now been exhausted and, not wishing to break faith with

those from whom we inherited our principles we now commit ourselves to a hunger strike...'

'Our widely recognised resistance has carried us through four years of immense suffering and it shall carry us through to the bitter climax of death if necessary.'

The Government responded by offering one of the demands - the right to wear civilian clothing - but backstepped under Loyalist pressure, thus admitting their own confusion as well as that they do not view the POWs as ordinary 'criminals'.

Political status was accepted in 1972 and presently exists in the Long Kesh cages and the C-Wing of Armagh jail for those sentenced up until April this year for alleged offences committed prior to 1 March 1976. The changes in the law were part of an overall shift in government policy which sought to criminalise the Irish struggle. The main aim of the British Government is to present the Republican movement as criminals. This strategy, if it were to be successful, required that they be treated as such. However, this hasn't been the case. Special laws exist in the north which treat political prisoners differently from those who normally come under the scrutiny of the legal system. The most notorious of these are the Emergency Provisions Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

It should be understood that the effect of prisoners dying in the H-Blocks could lead to retaliation by the IRA both inside and outside the six counties.

The Relatives Action Committee in a recent issue of *An Phoblacht Republican News* said: *'We want to state that if the British Establishment seeks to sow the wind of murder of the prisoners, it will reap the whirlwind of reaction from the Irish people.'*

As soon as the prisoners launched their threatened action, 142 inmates joined the 350 prisoners taking part in the blanket protest and another 30 refused to do prison work in solidarity.

Big Flame readers should give maximum solidarity to the hunger strikers. We must pull out all the stops in building support for the *Voices for Withdrawal* demonstration on 15 November, and march with the contingent supporting the hunger strikers, and also build for the Hunger Strike Solidarity Demo on 7 December in London.

Nothing New:

People may not realise that the current campaign for political status has been carried out many times before by Irish nationalist prisoners in British jails.

A notable period was during the 1916-1921 armed conflict after which the British were forced to leave all Ireland but the Six Counties. During that period the British Army still occupied Ireland and Irish Republicans who sought independence from Britain were locked up in prisons like Mountjoy and Portlaoise (then called Maryborough).

Padraic Fleming was arrested in February 1917 and charged with 'attempting to purchase arms and ammunition from British soldiers

and having in his possession a clip of cartridges and seditious literature consisting of two original poems and an extract from an Indiana newspaper containing a sermon on Easter Week.'

Fleming got five years penal servitude and he insisted on political status. He was offered this on condition he wore prison clothes. He would not accept this and carried on without food or clothing.

During the same period, Thomas Ashe died on hunger strike in

Mountjoy Jail. Ashe was a well-known agitator for Irish independence who had already been interned in the Frongoch camp in Wales.

The authorities decided to force feed the Mountjoy hunger-strikers. After four or five days Ashe died as a result of force-feeding. An international outcry caused the British to release the hunger-strikers under the 'Cat and Mouse Act' (passed to deal with the suffragette hunger strikers in London a few years earlier).

This law empowered the government to release prisoners on hunger strike, and later re-arrest them when their health had improved. Many Irish hunger strikers for political status were re-arrested in May 1918. Once again they employed the tactics of destroying prison property until political status was restored.

Padraic Fleming was a leader of the struggle for political status - which many Irish prisoners carried on by 'smashing-up tactics' and hunger strikes. With 19 other Fleming was 'rescued' from Mountjoy jail in 1919. But shortly afterwards, Terence McSwiney, Mayor of Cork, died on hunger strike in Brixton prison.

SUFFRAGETTES

Hunger-strike tactics, and the response of the British authorities under the 'Cat and Mouse Act' echoed the suffragette prisoners a few years before.

Both sets of campaigners were convinced that their cause was right and that their imprisonment was wrong. The same is true of Republican prisoners today. They are not criminals, but patriots and prisoners of war.

H-BLOCK PRISONERS 5 DEMANDS:

- 1 The right of prisoners to wear their own clothes instead of prison uniform
- 2 The right of free association with other prisoners
- 3 The right to refuse to do prison work
- 4 The right to organise educational and recreational activities, and to send and receive a weekly letter, a weekly parcel and a visit
- 5 Restoration of full remission of sentence

Pauline McLaughlin - One month to live?

Pauline McLaughlin, 23, was rushed to Musgrave Park Military Hospital on October 7 from Armagh Jail having had a heart attack. Her specialist estimates that she has one month to live.

Her case shows how negligent the prison authorities are towards those Republican prisoners who are on protest for political status. Pauline joined this protest which 30 women in Armagh jail are (still) conducting there, at the time of her admission to the jail in 1976, when she weighed 9½ stone. She was however forced to come on and off the protest due to ill health.

Pauline has had a nervous stomach complaint for years but this worsened about two years ago and she could not, literally, keep any food in her stomach. No attempt by the prison doctors, Drs. Cole and Spence, was made to diagnose or treat this illness. On March 17 this year, Dr. Cole conducted a tape recorded interview with Pauline saying that if she did not come off the protest she would die, (she then weighed 6 stone) which she agreed to do. However it seems that it was not his view to actually investigate the illness because between March and July she received no treatment at all.

On July 16, Pauline collapsed in her cell and was taken to Musgrave Park Military Hospital and after a day was transferred to Belfast City

Hospital's Cardiac Unit because a heart attack seemed likely due to insufficient body fluid. Within four days, she was returned to Armagh in a confused state. She had been given eight potassium intravenous drips, whilst one arm was chained to the bed. Between July and October, she was given no treatment other than one more intravenous drip.

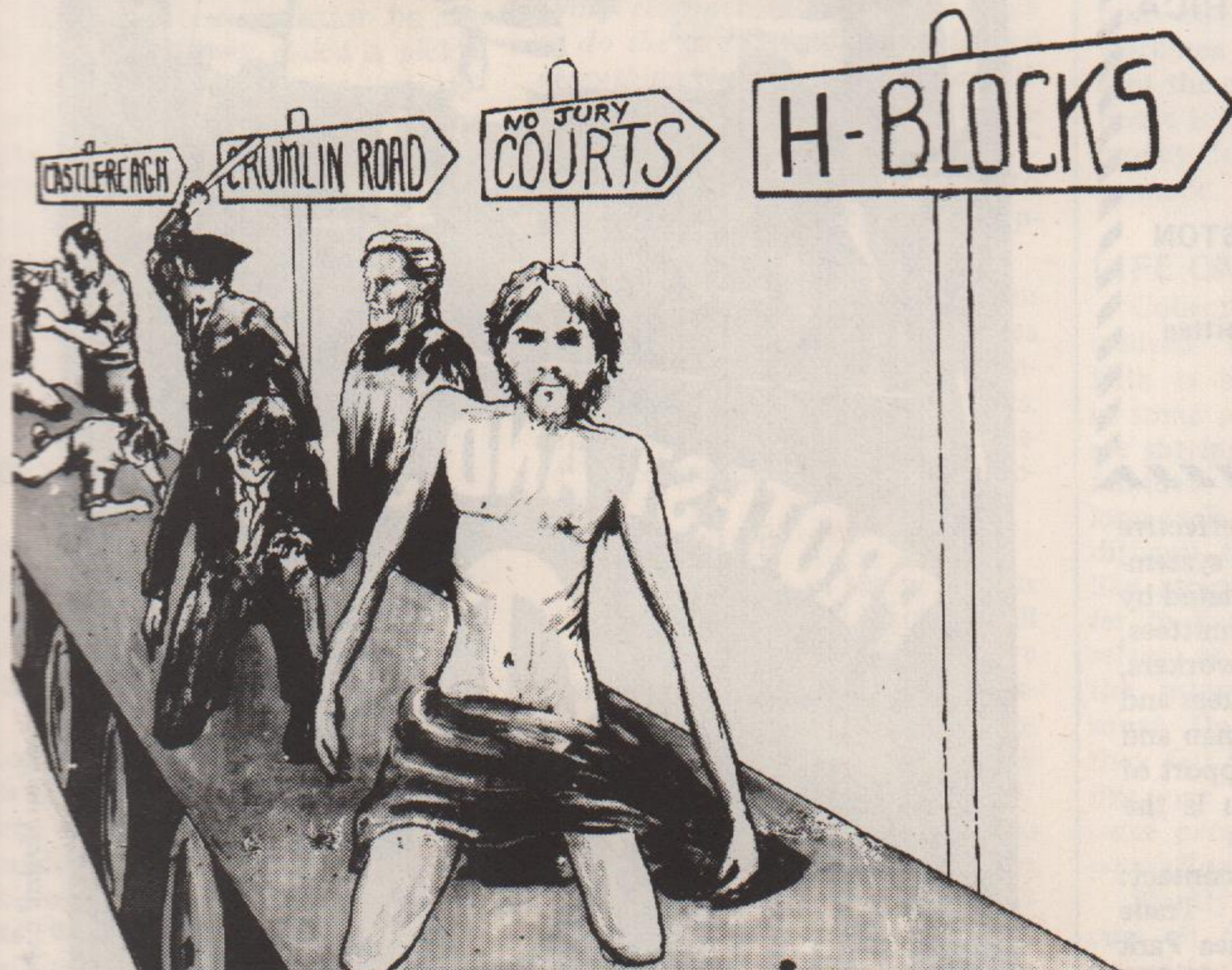


On October 7, she had a heart attack and was readmitted to Musgrave Park, having complained of chest pain since October 5. The prison authorities are entirely responsible for her near death. No one was allowed to visit her until Oct. 8. She weighed just over 5 stone then and weighs just under 4½ stone now. She is 5ft.8ins. tall. Pauline is allowed no more than the

usual prison quota of 2 half hour visits per week. Her mother has said that Pauline is too weak to leave her bed unaided and Father Murray, who is a regular prison visitor, has given her only one week to live (as of Oct. 28) because her general spirit is so low. It is only her great courage which keeps her alive now. There are armed male guards constantly at her door which she herself finds intolerable. Her treatment consists of 2 or 3 drips per week and vitamin pills which she continually vomits. Her hair is grey and most of her teeth have fallen out. Blood tests can no longer be taken because the needle hits her bone.

Pauline's family and friends are naturally, asking for her immediate release to a civilian hospital. There is no hope for her unless she has proper medical care and visits. The Armagh Co-ordinating committee has produced a petition calling for her release and we urge you to sign it and get others to sign it too. Similar groups in Ireland are doing the same. Lobby your MPs and government. Petitions available from Armagh Coordinating Committee, c/o A Woman's Place, 48 William IV St., London WC2. ACT NOV -BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

STOP PRESS: PAULINE WAS RETURNED TO ARMAGH JAIL ON OCT.29



POWERS OF WAR

FORGOTTEN PRISONERS

Special Category A, a recent new book by the Irish Republican Movement reveals the stories behind the current imprisonment of 80 Republicans in this country.

The men and women are either captured volunteers in the IRA (Irish Republican Army); or Irish people framed for things they didn't do. Either way, says the book, they are in reality prisoners of war (POWs).

Special Category A is based on the story of John Higgins, who was sent to prison in 1976, whilst leader of Sinn Fein (Britain).

'As in the case of John, juries have arrived to hear cases, and to consider verdicts, in courts which have been turned into virtual fortresses, patrolled by snipers and sniffer dogs. Surrounding roads are blocked off and a massive pantomime is acted out. Jurors, judges, lawyers, press and spectators are frisked on entering the court building and the supposed still innocent defendants arrive in a convoy of police cars and prison vans with sirens blaring and headlights on. All this is recorded in lurid detail in national and local press, TV and radio who report only the prosecution case, losing interest during the defence submissions and reviving their interest

only for the guilty verdicts and sentences.'

Higgins, who maintains he was framed, was convicted of two related offences, both of which carried a maximum of five years imprisonment. True to form, he was sentenced to five years for each offence, to run consecutively, making ten years in all.

On appeal his sentence was reduced to four years, and he was released from Parkhurst Prison last year — straight into the waiting hands of the police, who whisked him away and deported him to N. Ireland.

POWs are almost automatically 'Category A' prisoners, which means top security. But they are still treated differently from ordinary Category A prisoners.

They are shunted around from prison to prison. A favourite trick is to move them on visiting day, just before their visit, so that relatives often make fruitless visits from perhaps as far away as the west of Ireland.

STRONG BOXES

POWs frequently find themselves in solitary confinement, either locked up in their cells, or in the punishment block, for refusal to bend the knee to GOD (Good Order and Discipline). Liam McLarnon, for example, is one of several to have spent two years in solitary confinement.

The Home Office has also devised special segregation units and 'strong boxes' for the POWs.

The major bone of contention is visits. They are usually allowed only with close relatives, and there must be no physical contact. Both prisoner and visitor are given close searches, and during the visit two or three screws are present, taking notes of the conversation.

Consequently some POWs have refused to take visits under such conditions, sacrificing their only bit of contact with the outside world rather than be humiliated.

RESISTANCE

The POWs have a proud history of resistance inside the prisons. Even those who were not members of the Republican Movement before their imprisonment have felt the need for solidarity against the authorities.

Being dispersed throughout a dozen prisons, the POWs have not been able to adopt the mass refusal to wear prison uniform that their comrades in H Block have.

Different situations demand different tactics, so the POWs have concentrated on: escape attempts; roof-top protests; organising themselves as Republicans; opposing brutality and injustice; educating themselves and other prisoners; and publicising their demands and their support for the continuing war against British rule in Ireland.

During the past few years there have been numerous escape attempts, all of which have unfortunately been unsuccessful, and most of which have been hushed up by the Home Office.

The deaths on hunger strike of Michael Gaughan in 1974 and Frank Stagg in 1976 effectively

brought an end to the tactic of long term hunger strikes in English gaols. However, from time to time POWs still engage in short hunger strikes to highlight a particular issue.

Since the deaths mentioned above three more POWs have died in English gaols: Noel Jenkinson, who died in suspicious circumstances in Leicester in 1976; Sean O'Connell who died of untreated cancer in October 1977; and Giuseppe Conlon who died of untreated TB in January 1980.

FORGOTTEN

Socialists in Britain have only very recently begun to seriously take up the question of Irish POWs in the six counties. But with one or two exceptions, the POWs in England have remained the forgotten prisoners.

Sinn Fein has organised countless demonstrations outside prisons all over the country, in solidarity with the prisoners. But they have often met with very little support from the left.

The recently formed London based *Charter 80* has made no mention of either the crucial demand for political status, or the POWs in this country. If the Charter is to be of any meaningful help to the POWs, both these questions will have to be taken up.

BUILDING SUPPORT

Sinn Fein has done wonders in keeping up regular solidarity work within the Irish community, despite constant police harassment, and the threat of being deported, or even ending up POWs themselves.

The Troops Out Movement, and BF supporters, should not shirk from the responsibility of raising the issue of all Irish POWs within the *English* working class.

Copies of *Special Category A*, which is 100 pages long with plenty of photographs and drawings, are available at £1.25 (plus 25p postage) from E. Coughy, 2 Leabon Grove, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 0LE. Ask for bulk rates.

The monthly *POW Bulletin*, with up to date news, plus details of pickets and protests, is also available from the above address. Please include a donation to cover costs.

And, last but not least, the prisoners very much need books, which must be either new or in good condition. Again, send to the above address. They will be very much appreciated.

By Ted Rodgers, active in Leeds Troops Out Movement.



NO BRITISH SOLUTION

Northern Ireland is one of Britain's last colonies. In appearance it resembles many British towns and cities. But there the resemblance ends. For the last twelve years, Northern Ireland has been under military rule. The presence of the British army has become a daily fact of life for a third of the population — the catholic minority. Most of this group have come to regard themselves as being at war with the British Army. As one Derry woman put it,

'Although the British Government keeps telling us it's a law and order problem, or civil unrest or just the troubles, to me it was a war situation from the beginning. Because, you know, when I saw out of my window a soldier pointing a gun through it and when I saw a tank sitting in the next door neighbour's back garden and the turret moved round after me ... and the soldier came into my house and put the gun up against my neck and said, "Up against the wall!" ... I just couldn't think of that in terms of a law and order problem, to me that was a war.'

ARTIFICIAL PARTITION

So begins the superbly illustrated pamphlet 'No British Solution'. This publication lucidly puts the arguments for the demands **Immediate withdrawal from Ireland** and **Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole**. It begins with a look at the history of British

involvement in Ireland and how the current situation in Ireland came about. In an easy-to read style, it shows how the artificial partition of Ireland was created and the reasons the British Government took this course of action, as well as how the Loyalist community have become tied to a reactionary ideology and have made alliances with the ruling classes through such organisations as the Orange Order.

Throughout the pamphlet, revealing quotes show the background to the events and the motives and thinking behind the actions of the British ruling class and British and Irish politicians.

However, I have three criticisms of this otherwise excellent pamphlet. First, throughout the publication the communities within the 6 counties are mainly referred to as 'Catholic' and 'Protestant'. As a result there is a danger that readers new to the political situation in Ireland will see the struggle in the

terms in which the British state would like us to see the struggle: an inexplicable religious conflict with the kindly British trying to keep the 'irrational natives' apart.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

I believe it would be better to describe the situation as it is: a social and political conflict. The British and the 'Loyalists' against the 'Nationalists'. With, of course, a brief explanation that most Nationalists are catholic and most Loyalists are protestants.

Secondly, in common with most left publications, there is the glaring omission of even a mention of the 80+ Irish men and women political prisoners being held in English gaols. Their struggles for full political status and repatriation are just as important as the POWs in the H-Blocks and in Armagh. They are imprisoned as part of the British strategy to try to eliminate any

resistance to British rule by Irish people in this country. This is done, along with the arbitrary arrest and detention of anyone who campaigns against British policy on Ireland or who comes to Britain from Ireland to try to break down the wall of censorship around actual events in Ireland, by means of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (P.T.A.)

P.T.A.

Thirdly, the use of the P.T.A. legislation itself is mentioned just once and only in the context of how such legislation, after being tested in Ireland, is slowly being introduced in Britain to be used against the working class.

Despite this it is an extremely well-produced pamphlet and essential reading for all on the left. Buy it. Read it. Then order some to sell to your friends.

No British Solution costs 65p (including postage) and is available from T.O.M., Box 10, 2a St. Paul's Road, London N1.

MIDDLE-EAST WAR: NOT FOR US TO TAKE SIDES



IRAN: Abadan oil refinery in flames after bombers raid.

Francoise DeMuider

USA OPINION POLL POLITICS

The most important men in the presidential campaigns of Reagan and Carter were the opinion poll analysts (Richard Wirthlin for Reagan, Pat Caddell for Carter) in charge of 'presenting' the candidates. The method of analysis used was to select a cross section of the U.S. electorate (the sample of both parties was approximately 7000 voters!) and to conduct hour long interviews (500 questions per interview) at key points of the campaign with each of 7000 members of the sample. The objective of the interviews by the Carter analysts was to assess the strong points of Carter's performances and the weak points of Reagan's — and then on the basis of this information to alter Carter's line on the issues the sample indicated he was unpopular on.

In a very interesting book called *The Permanent Campaign*, the American social scientist Sidney Blumenthal argues that there are three stages in the control of public opinion; the first is to 'construct' the image of a president in the same way you would a soap-powder, the second is the constant monitoring of the responses of sample members during the campaign (this was done by both Reagan and Carter during their campaigns) and the third is to use the same methods of the constant consultation of the voter sample once the president is elected — it is for this reason that Blumenthal talks of the *permanent campaign*.

PERMANENT CAMPAIGN

And this idea of the permanent campaign is not political fiction — it is an accurate description of the 1976-1980 Carter presidency. As President during those years, Carter did not govern with a political programme; he responded to popular demand. When the 'nation' asked for a strong president, he took symbolic action (e.g. the 'Chopper' invasion of Iran). When public opinion wanted (or was manipulated to want) an end to high wage rises, Carter introduced a tight fiscal and monetary policy which was quickly dropped when public opinion changed. As Pat Caddell, Carter's chief poll analyst, puts it 'for reality we must substitute the symbolic, for substance we must substitute the form!'

It is quite obvious that such Madison Avenue salesmanship is seen through by the electorate. U.S. voters are profoundly sceptical of politicians and the turn-out of voters gets lower at each successive election. But there are no signs that this scepticism is in any way progressive — it leads to an acceptance of the status quo ('all politicians are the same: there is nothing we can do') and, even worse, a readiness to contemplate more authoritarian forms of government. The feeling many people have is that to be allowed to choose between Carter and Reagan is hardly better than having no choice at all.

NOT HERE YET

It would be wrong to conclude that the situation is as bad in this country. After all, the difference between Labour and Tory is not just a P-R job, the two parties do represent the interests of different classes and class fractions. On the other hand, Thatcher's victory was greatly aided by the skilful way advertisers presented her campaign. And the large number of working class votes the Tories got make clear how tenuous the links are between working people and the Labour Party — even at the level of elections. The *permanent campaign* may not be as developed in this country as in the States but then everything new takes a few years to cross the Atlantic.

(Sidney Blumenthal's book *The Permanent Campaign* is published by Beacon Press, Boston.)

THE IRAN-IRAQ war is moving into its third month with no apparent end in sight. The Iraqis have still only fully captured one town, Qasr-E-Shirin, and have yet to devastate the Iranian economy. The Iranians fight on, determined to continue until they win back lost territory and lost pride.

The war began as an act of Iraqi aggression designed to prop up the Hussein regime. It has become a war of attrition.

Who is fighting and for what? This is where the problems start, where religious and class forces and international alliances enter the picture. The Iraqi regime is a clique or sect within a religious grouping—Sunni Moslems—that has always been dominant in Iraq, but which has been more and more under the threat, especially from Shi'ites inspired by the Iranian revolution. Of the other large minority, the Kurds, only a small number support the regime. Others are believed to have taken up arms against the regime—which no doubt explains the King of Jordan's offer in mid-October to send in troops against them.

The Iraqi majority, the Shi'ite Moslems, are split between those who hold allegiance to Khomeiny, and those whose material interests rest with the rapid, oil-fuelled economic development of modern Iraq.

IRAN

The Iranians are even more of an amalgam of distinct nationalities and classes. In the burst of national chauvinism that followed the Iraqi invasion, some of the Fedayeen guerillas have capitulated to the Khomeiny regime and joined the

battle. The Iranian Kurds have remained mute, enjoying a respite from their war against the Islamic Government, and at least some revolutionaries, including many who split from the Fedayeen, have refused to go along with the regime's jingoistic propaganda.

Perhaps the most surprising boost for Khomeiny was the refusal of Iranian Arabs to side with the Iraqi invaders when they entered Arab territory posing as 'liberators'.

FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT

The alignment of international forces is confused by two issues. One is the American hostages in Iran and their importance for the US presidential election. The other is the recent ending of alliances between Iran and the USA and Iraq and the USSR. The hostage issue has led the Carter administration into negotiations with Iran at a time when Iraq was becoming the key US ally. The Iran-US talks will mean crucial spare parts and fuel for Iran at a time when its ability to continue the war is being stretched to the utmost. So American aid will cause damage to Iraq.

Yet underlying all the events is one unmistakable trend: the countries that produce most oil and

dominate OPEC, notably Saudi Arabia and Iraq, are being integrated into the political and economic network of the Western alliance. If Iraq does not get bogged down in its war with Iran, it could emerge as the dominant power in the Gulf.

The countries opposed to them in OPEC, notably Libya, Syria, and Iran, are likely to set up a counter-axis, with a stronger commitment to an independent Palestine, to independence from the West and to a closer trading relationship with the Soviet bloc.

NO SUPPORT FOR EITHER SIDE

There are those, notably in the IMG and Fourth International, who argue that socialists should support Iran in the war. They argue that Iran has been through an anti-imperialist revolution that enjoyed mass support and that overthrew one of the largest armies in the world. By this argument, the Iraqi invasion is an act of aggression against a progressive movement.

Big Flame does not consider the Khomeini regime progressive, and we do not feel it is our job as revolutionary socialists to choose between two blood-thirsty, reactionary regimes. Nor is there any evidence that progressive forces in Iran will gain space within the war mobilisation. To the contrary, they are being swept up in the 'jihad' (holy war) against Iraq.

It is time we stopped assuming that 'anti-imperialism' is automatically progressive. In Iran, 'anti-imperialism' goes hand-in-hand with suppression of socialist groups, vicious attacks on the rights of women and gays, and attempts to undermine the workers' committees that emerged in the revolution, and with a war of aggression against a democratic and socialist movement in Kurdistan. What's more, it's an 'anti-imperialism' that turns up its nose at the USA while linking arms with France, Germany and Japan. To support this rhetorical stance means to encourage the suicide of the progressive movement in Iran.

Workers, peasants, and socialists will not benefit from an Iranian victory against Iraq. Instead they will suffer further attack from a regime, even more confirmed in its dogmatic, religious beliefs. The only way in which they can protect themselves, and still take the struggle forward, is to link arms with the Kurds and others struggling against the regime. It was the Kurdish struggle that ensured the survival of democratic rights after the revolution. And the same struggle will fight for their survival after this war—whatever wins.

Big Flame International Commission



IRAQ: Power station burns after Iranian raid.

the TWO FACES OF CHINA

At a state level, political events in China are moving very fast. The trial of the Gang of Four is about to begin, anyone involved in the Cultural Revolution is discredited—even Mao is coming in for criticism. A turn to the right? Certainly, but not a straightforward one. For at a local level, there are many aspects of life in China today that are important for socialists to consider. Sally Truett, a member of Big Flame, recently returned from a trip to China and the USSR. She writes about what she saw.



China — a state run by a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy, or the most relaxed, purposeful place I've ever been in. I'm still having trouble reconciling the two views after spending a couple of weeks there this summer.

The overwhelming impression was the second. The feeling of warmth began as we crossed the border after a week on the train through the USSR. There people looked and acted as if they expected to be jumped on by authority at any moment. Into China — and we were suddenly able to wander where we liked, in the countryside, up mountains, in and out of towns. We were constantly adopted by Chinese people willing to show us bits of their lives in an independent and confident way and these glimpses added up to a feeling that while China may only be a 'So-called Socialist Society', I had plenty to learn about a better quality of life under so-called socialism.

FEELING OF CONFIDENCE

Let me try to pin down some of these glimpses. Most obvious was the contrast with other poor countries I've been to. I can only feel anger at the political current that dismisses China as state capitalist, with nothing to choose between it and India. Having food, clothes, a home and economic security is all-important for allowing people to develop confidence and self-respect, for a start.

People's confidence was one of the most striking features. Again, a contrast with the USSR where people on the railway talked with dislike and fear of the Chinese. The Soviet threat was dismissed by people in China with a confident shrug. But more fundamentally, there was the confidence of old people stiffly doing their exercises on the early morning streets, of the cyclists commandeering the streets and coping placidly with policemen, of the peasants or road-workers we'd stopped at random explaining their work, of a young girl putting right her brigade leader.

DE-EMPHASIZING SEX

This personal confidence was most noticeable among women. Only by watching Chinese women talking to men straight, never simpering, never self-conscious because their bodies are never being watched, did I realise how subtle are our Western messages of male control. I certainly felt liberated by two weeks of feeling totally unthreatened and unintimidated by men. (And began to wonder how far we can develop real confidence and independence until we've totally overhauled our system of sexual messages and the ideas of sexuality from which they come.)

Then there is the collective attitude to the environment. Everything is beautifully cared for — but the line of responsibility between 'them' and 'us' is fuzzy. The trees on housing estates are not only unvandalised but fruitbearing. Families without courtyards colonise the city pavements: the trees lining the streets of Xian were festooned with washing, marrows and gourds grew up them, sunflowers in the soil around the trunk.

We spent a lot of time watching

people work and were struck everywhere by the relaxed, involved atmosphere. On building sites, in the fields, in factories, it was more like watching people doing their gardening than their 'work'. People work long hours, with simple tools which make the work heavy and for exploitative wages. Women in an enamel works we visited would have had to work for two days to earn enough to buy one of the

beads they'd so laboriously made. But people set their own pace. Road gangs had the easy-going atmosphere of a road-side market. Women in a furniture factory had moved their sanding out of the lacquer fumes into the sun-filled yard. There aren't the rigid lines between work and non work, workers and others. City building sites double up as adventure playgrounds and children play in the piles of sand; children use a huge machine tool plant as a short cut to their nursery school; I saw tenants working with council workers to lay paving stones so that grandfather's chair outside the front door could be cemented in or so that the pot plants could go on catching the sun.

COLLECTIVE WORKING

The neighbourhood workshops in particular have brought some of

the companionable feeling of farm work into the cities. Sometimes each household will do one stage on the 'assembly line': the first washing old cotton gloves for the next household to unpick, the next to sort and the next to knit up. Neighbours join in and old people are central — grandfather usually has to cope with the babies as grandmother has too much else on her plate. The pictures you see of 'smiling Chinese workers' really aren't posed: to me, it all added up to an idea of what work could be like without alienation.

And there were plenty of signs of the creativity this can release (again, a vivid contrast with the austerity of the USSR). Apart from the plants everywhere, the elaborate displays of fruit and vegetables, the most vivid were the paintings we saw done by peasants in Huhsien. They are now famous and established — but still done by peasants with precious little spare time in tiny village painting clubs. They decorate the clay walls of the clinic or the granary, or create patterns from the special work of each brigade — cloth dyeing, cabbage growing, fungus collecting. In the factories there were the notice boards where the workers in each shop had developed their own style of cheerful, ingenious displays to keep track of production, accidents, repairs, bonuses.

Another obvious thing was the obvious pleasure and satisfaction people got from their high level of participation in local activities, not just political ones. In a Peking housing estate we met members of the residents committee, elected and with initial responsibility for social/criminal problems. They were pretty disgusted by our reports of short sharp shock treatment for juvenile delinquents and were more interested in the links between home and school.

They felt they hadn't been able

to tackle the social isolation of the new blocks of flats but an elderly woman who had been elected leader of one of the blocks felt that she was beginning to build up contact from her very practical responsibility for shopping, child-care and newspaper delivery for the block. Two other women from the estate explained with enthusiasm how they had volunteered to do basic medical training when the residents decided to turn over one of the flats to be a clinic.

SOCIALIST PARADISE?

So, is China a socialist paradise in the making? My judgement wasn't completely clouded by the warmth and happiness that surrounded our visit. Here are some of the things we saw that confirmed for me that it isn't.

Most striking was the absence of any sign of worker control, as opposed to participation. Factory leadership in all the plants we visited was appointed, not elected; prices and production are decided by the provincial or state authorities. Our guides were quite unembarrassed by the fact. A trade union leader explained her role as to 'organise the workers' — to study, to produce, to do sport. The wisdom of the current 'pragmatic' leadership, that what is needed is better management (did we have any tips?) and competition through pricing to stimulate worker productivity was repeated to us in factories and brigades. Democracy is being interpreted as votes and congresses, not worker control.

There is the eagerness to blame current problems, from juvenile delinquency to low productivity, on the machinations of the Gang of Four, without questioning a system which allowed four people allegedly to seize power. The Gang are criticised both for their undemocratic methods and their policies but even ex-Red Guards seemed not to be re-examining their own role in the Cultural Revolution. The response to its end seems to have been a rush out of politics: the few political songs at a concert were much less popular than 'Jingle Bells', the current hit.

People seem to be complacent that the current moves to open up more competition and private initiative will not have an irreversible effect on the positive gains that have been won. How long can the absence of professional mystique and obvious class differences survive the introduction of elite schools, entered by competitive exam? The Minister of Education, claiming that they will set an example for other schools to follow, sounds like Rhodes Boyson. Time and again we found that students from these schools that we met in the street, eager to practice

their English, were the children of teachers or cadres.

NUCLEAR FAMILY

I was most depressed by our meeting with representatives from the Womens Federation in Xian. They were justifiably proud of the enormous progress women have made in the last 30 years but saw it in economic terms and with no need for continued ideological struggle. They saw no threat in the girlie pen knives newly on sale, in the machismo of the imported Hong Kong films, in the use of women to advertise calculating machines on hoardings. The leading propaganda campaign in China at the moment is for one couple, one child, and has come from the Communist Party for economic reasons. Girls are used on the posters to illustrate the ideal family — but they gave the reason as to discourage people from trying again for a boy. Again, they saw their primary role as to organise women, under the leadership of the Communist Party: the idea that autonomous groups of women could contribute something to socialism or the Party itself was met with a blank.

NO AUTONOMY

So we saw plenty to confirm the view that the Chinese are not moving relentlessly from socialism to communism. I saw no signs of structures being built at a regional or national level as alternatives to the bourgeois state. They don't seem to have been able to overcome the problems of combining planning for national needs and regional balance with worker control of production, and it is the latter which has lost out. They have not developed a relationship between the Party and the people that has allowed autonomous movements of workers, women or minority groups to bring their power and experience into politics.

But they have built a system, I think, where the combination of mass support for the government with a framework of socialist ideology has released a flood of confidence, creativity, collective responsibility and self-organisation at a local level. I want to look at these more closely and try to work out how this has been achieved and what we can learn about the interaction between an economic system and people's attitudes and behaviour. And use what we can in our own struggles. I certainly left with a real sense of exhilaration about how much nicer people are going to be in a socialist society.

And just as it's possible that while we were in China we missed all the signs of a truly repressive totalitarian state, so it's probable that we will miss signs of the building of future struggles there.



Wall painting at Huhsien health clinic

A villager at the Huhsien painting club



Socialist Feminist Conference: a growing understanding of imperialism

THIS YEAR'S Socialist Feminist Conference was organised around the theme of Imperialism. This followed some anger last year among many women engaged in anti-racist work and solidarity campaigns with liberation struggles, that the 1979 Socialist Feminist Conference had ignored these questions. They felt that socialist feminism in this country was parochial, and was ignoring the implications of the fact that Britain is an imperialist country. Not only were British women colluding in the exploitation of women in the 'Third World', but even socialist feminists were failing to confront the forms of imperialism which exist on our own doorstep—notably racism and the presence of British troops in the North of Ireland.

Socialist Feminist conferences tend to lie on the boundary between a decision-making conference and a jamboree; the more euphoric the sense of sisterhood—and women feel a real excitement at being amongst over a thousand likeminded women—the greater the tendency to avoid fundamental disagreements. There is a genuine collective commitment to a conception of feminism which can contribute to and advance socialist ideas and practice, and also to the development of a distinctive and coherent socialist feminism. The conference is there to move this discussion forward; the jamboree is there to celebrate our collective concern to do so. Which aspect actually predominates is never entirely clear, and this has the effect of leaving the outcome of the conferences less than satisfying—yet not totally unsatisfying. Women did leave this year's conference with a greater identification with, and awareness of the problems facing black women in Britain, and Irish women, particularly; they also left, I think, with a greater concern to share in the struggles of these women. How far a clear analysis emerged of the relationship between feminism and these struggles is questionable, but it may well be that this is neither the real objective of the conference nor feasible in the time and conditions available.

PERSONAL POLITICS

The immediate problem for socialist feminists has been to move forward from what verges on a self-congratulatory recognition of the importance of the personal in politics towards incorporating this in an outward-looking politics. It is the attempt to confront this problem that has made the issues raised in *Beyond the Fragments* so widely discussed, and has led the Socialist Feminist Conference to encourage socialist feminist women to broad-

en their own outlook, and also to try and examine the contribution feminism could make to anti-imperialist struggle.

The driving impetus behind the conference was the women who have been involved in the Women Against Imperialism, and the Women and Ireland groups. They have been engaged in a long and often bitter debate with other feminists about the significance for women, and hence for feminism, of the nationalist struggle in Northern Ireland. So it was not surprising that the concrete issue of Ireland dominated the conference.

IRELAND

By arresting two women (see caption) the Special Branch may not have intended to arouse the political passions of hundreds of women, many of whom had hitherto been at the very least ambivalent about their relationship to the Irish

women in struggle. As it was, they stimulated a heated workshop on Ireland and mobilized the women at the conference to treat the struggle in Ireland as something relevant to themselves.

WORKSHOPS

Set against the immediacy of this issue, the workshop discussions turned out to be rather low key, and in many respects, disappointing. Because the theme of anti-imperialism was on the one hand unfamiliar to many women, and on the other, intended to touch women at many different levels, the conference was organised into Block workshops, in which the same wide range of issues to do with imperialism could be discussed. The idea was that by everyone discussing the main themes all women would have 'the opportunity of developing their own analysis', and could 'develop their own pace and forms of debate'. What happened in practice was that women with very different kinds of 'knowledge' and involvement were confronted with topics as diverse as 'the family as a production unit' and 'the effect of the world crisis in capitalism on women in different parts of the world'. Both analysis and active participation by more women might have been better if the workshops had been more specialised and attempted to relate the

campaigns and activities in which women are involved to a broader and more internationalist and anti-imperialist perspective.

BLACK WOMEN ISOLATED

The conference did have major weaknesses in the variability of the workshops and the often woolly and directionless discussion. One black woman I talked to felt after the first day that despite the theme of the conference, she and other black women were still isolated,

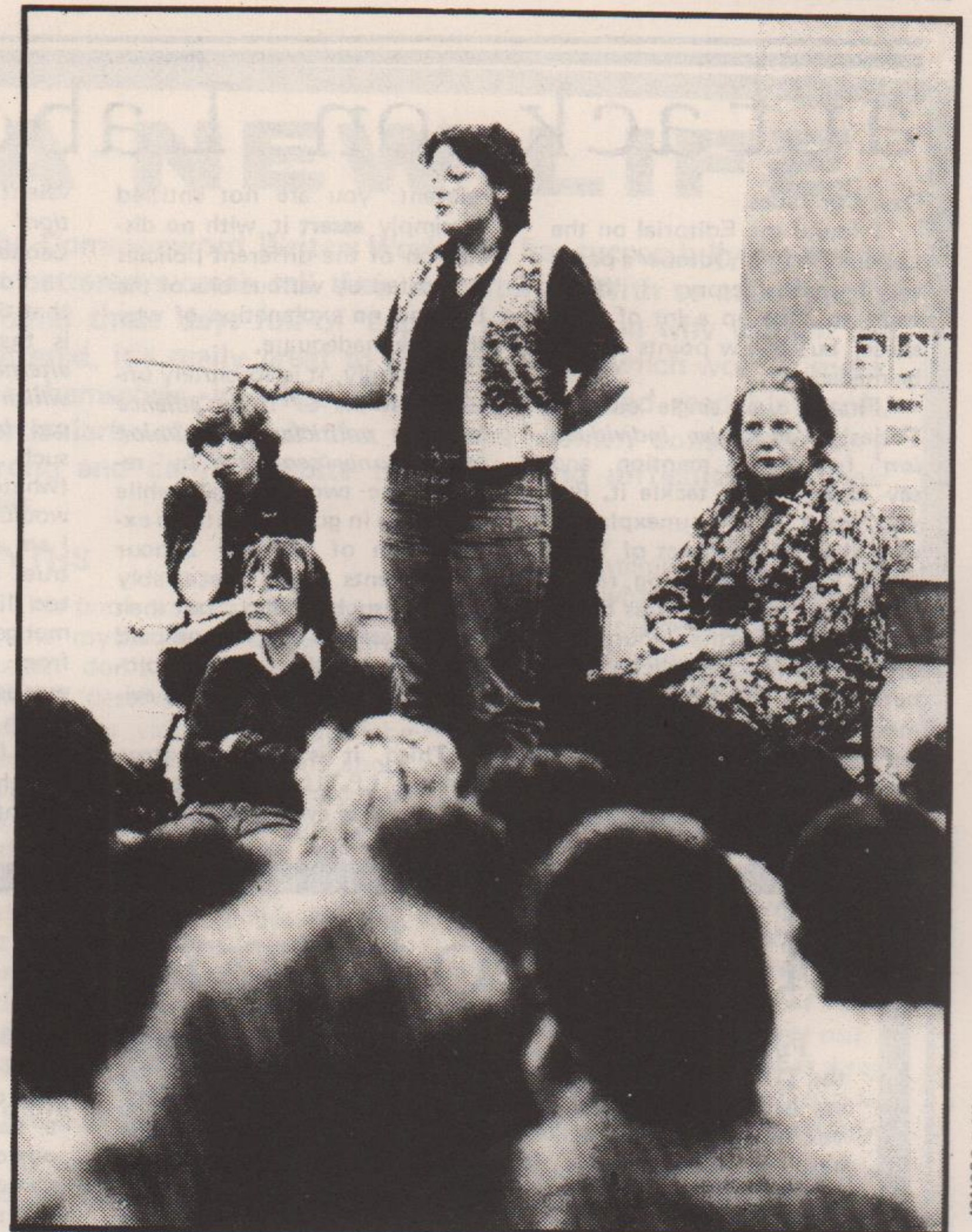
and the reality of their oppression still had not got through to most of the women at the conference. (There was an awful lot of self-reference to middle-class women during the weekend).

The conference also seemed to me 'tyrannised by structurelessness'. The Socialist Feminist current's form of non-organisation meant that the conference was dominated by those who had planned it, and failed to throw up democratic mechanisms of organisation or indeed of future planning.

POSITIVE PLENARY

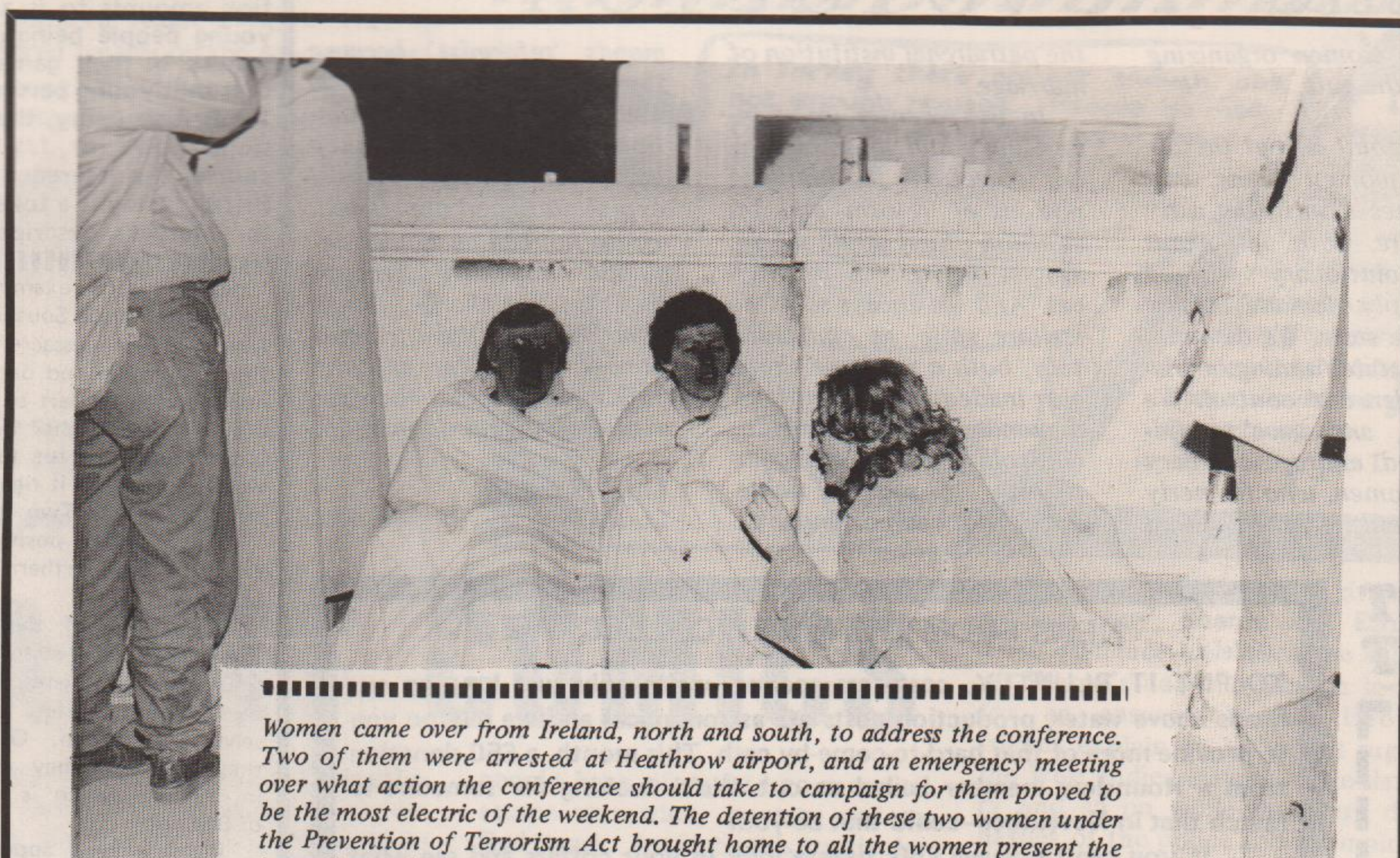
Yet the plenary session at the end turned out to be surprisingly open and touched on rawer nerves than I had expected, given the politeness and inconclusiveness of the workshops. The best features of the women's movement—the willingness to state one's position and to be listened to—were evident, and the real argument and passion, particularly about Ireland, left one with a real feeling of urgency that we have to continue all the struggles, and bring into them more thought about the issues raised by internationalising feminism. And the moving account by Anwar Ditta of her continuing struggle to bring back her children into this country, which was the climax of the plenary session, served to remind us that feminism and socialism are about the continuing struggles of real people against oppression.

R. GARDNER



Marie Mulholland — workshop on Ireland

Jill Posen



Women came over from Ireland, north and south, to address the conference. Two of them were arrested at Heathrow airport, and an emergency meeting over what action the conference should take to campaign for them proved to be the most electric of the weekend. The detention of these two women under the Prevention of Terrorism Act brought home to all the women present the immediacy of our opposition to the state, and how closely the conference discussions related to problems of real life for many women. A large section of the conference went to Downing Street to hand in a petition demanding the release of the two women, Maire O'Hare and Anne Boyle, and then to picket the police station where they were being held. Maire was later released, but Anne (and Rose McAllister, arrested later that weekend) have returned to Ireland and are excluded from returning to this country.



attack on Labour

Dear Comrades,

I found the Editorial on the Labour Party in October's paper very unsatisfactory. I don't want to take up a lot of your space, but a few points should be made.

Firstly, you single out the Tories' 'aggressive individualism' for special mention, and say Labour can't tackle it. But you leave totally unexplained why that single aspect of Toryism is worth mentioning, rather than (say) jingoism, class bigotry, racism... Further, there is a bitter and much-publicised debate within the LP at the moment over how to fight the Tories, and for what objectives. You are entitled to think that both sides of this debate are ir-

relevant: you are not entitled to simply assert it, with no discussion of the different policies advocated by various bits of the LP, and no explanation of why they are inadequate.

Secondly, it is absolutely untrue that the LP is 'an alliance between politicians and union leaders...only cemented by' rewards the two sides get while Labour is in government. No examination of post-war Labour governments could conceivably bear out such a claim... but then in this case too you rely on bald assertion, rather than old-fashioned eccentricities like evidence...

Third, it is equally untrue that the LP-TU alliance at national level is even vaguely equi-

valent to the 'graft and corruption' of some (but not all!) Labour councils.

Fourth, you appear to think that the problem at the moment is that there are no 'available alternative policies around which a wide popular alliance can be mobilised', and that if such policies were 'available' (whatever that means) people would flock to their banner. I am afraid that this, too, is untrue; in addition, it sounds all too like the miracle-ingredient mongering which we often get from Trotskyist devotees of wonderful programmes, but which I for one don't expect from Big Flame.

I hold no brief for the politics of Labourism in any of the

write
on



versions currently available, and I have no intention to engage in a political defence of the Labour Party. But, to be frank, defence is not necessary when the attack is so inadequate: I hope you will carry more convincing material in future.

Comradely,
Chris Marshall (Norwich)

Hour of greatest need

Friends and supporters of the TOM, our hour of greatest need has arrived, and I, one of seven hunger strikers here in Long Kesh's H-Blocks, call on you all to make concerted efforts on our behalf. Your work to date on all aspects of the war in Ireland has been much needed and greatly appreciated and I take confidence from the knowledge that your efforts shan't cease until British troops leave our shores and so end this blood-drenched chapter in both our nations' histories.

You in the TOM have always recognised that British occupation will always mean death and sorrow. And you also realize that indifference and apathy by the British



public to its Government's Irish policies shares a portion of the responsibility for all who die tragically in a war which Britain has no right to be involved in. At present the British Government's

apathy into concerned action. Every man, woman and child on the streets with a banner, every slogan or poster on display, every name on a petition, every letter to a newspaper, each barbaric approach to the situation in H Block has caused much protest to be made on our behalf. But, as I introduced this letter, I now repeat that our hour of greatest need has arrived.

We the blanketmen have finally been forced by British Government intransigency to embark on a hunger strike to the death. And it shall undoubtedly be to the death unless a strong and unified showing of concern can be achieved. Indifference must be turned into care,

and every action no matter how small it may seem, all are needed. All count if tragedy is to be averted.

Finally, you who have supported us to date must escalate your efforts, you must spread your concern. If we move forward united and in confidence we shall succeed in bringing this shame-covered chapter of prison history to a deathless and much deserved victory.

Yours in hope and confidence,
Leo Green,
Republican POW,
H Block 4, Long Kesh.

This letter, written on a scrap of paper, was smuggled out of Long Kesh.

Reform and Revolution

Dear Eds,

A few things written by the Socialist Feminist planning group, published in our last issue, worry me. In the very first paragraph they refer disparagingly to the 'reformist demands of the women's movement'. Presumably they refer to demands for more nurseries, better health care, refuges for battered women, rape crisis centres and so on. On the very same page, ironically, we describe the import-

ance of women organizing to fight the cuts.

The point is that the demands women made and sometimes won in the early 70s were both important and revolutionary. We did not simply demand money from the state. We demanded that state funding be placed under our control. We inspired, and gave confidence and courage to, very many women, who formerly were totally crushed within

the patriarchal institution of marriage.

In BF recently we've increasingly had to emphasize our objections to simplistic notions of 'reform' and 'revolution'. First of all, we are against reforms in themselves. And we always saw 'the welfare state' as contradictory, both a response (however inadequate) to workers' demands, and a means of controlling us in the community and home we do not call particular de-

mands 'reformist' because they try to change things now. We call them revolutionary in so far as they build our courage to resist exploitation and oppression. we do not call particular demands 'reformist' because they try to change things now. We call them revolutionary in so far as they build our courage to resist exploitation and oppression.

Linda Marshall,
London.

ALL OUT AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT

Ticket Application Form

(First come, first served)

Please return to: Mr G Page, General Secretary,
Greater London Labour Party (Regional Council),
195 Walworth Road, London SE17.

Organisation

Please send a ticket to the following member(s). (£9 per head).

Name Address

NEWS FROM THE PAPER COLLECTIVE

TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, costs are soaring; we're only just keeping our heads above water, production costs are astronomical and we rely on you to provide more of that hard-to-come-by cash. This month, a £50 donation from a Hounslow member bailed us out. We're looking for someone to match that in November—could that be you?

If you can't manage £50, have a look in your coffers and see what you can afford—we're often told by readers how they look forward to the paper. If we are to continue, we really do rely on you.

URGENT—send money (cheques payable to Big Flame Newspaper) to:

Big Flame Newspaper
27 Clerkenwell Close,
London E.C. 1

If you're sending in articles for December *Big Flame*, remember these deadlines: Tues, 25th November (features) and Thursday, 27th November (news).

Y FANER GOCH (The Red Flag), Welsh Socialist Republican Paper, £2 for 6 issues from: 43 Brynelli Tce., Abertridwr, Morgannwg Ganol, CYMRU.

INTI-ILLIMANI: Sheffield Poly: Sun 23 Nov: Tickets £2 (in the Students Union).

COVENTRY BF Public Meeting on 'WHO NEEDS PRISONS' (Speaker - Geoff Coggan PROP) Fri, 7 Nov. 7-7.30, Lanchester Poly, Room L.13.

Subvertisements

S.E. REGION TUC. Lunch-time Rally - Tues 2 Dec 12-2. Camden Town Hall, N.W.1. CONFERENCE vs. the Cuts & Tory Economic Policy - Mon 24 Nov., 7pm, Friends House, Euston Rd., N.W.1. Credentials with £1 from A. Walter, 42 Aberfield, Peckwater St., N.W.5. Tel: 485 3800 (eve).

SHEFFIELD BF BENEFIT - Live Music. Sat 22 Nov. 8 while late. Royal Hotel, London Rd. 70p entrance (40p unwaged).

BF ANTI-RACIST/ANTI-FASCIST COMMISSION - Sunday, 16 November in Nottingham (more info from convenor or local groups).

March and Rally in support of 277 Filipino workers threatened with deportation called by Overseas Resident Domestic Campaign. TG-WU & NUPE support. Sun. 23 Nov. Assemble 12.30 at the Monument. Rally 3.00, UCL, Malet St., W.C.1.

BOP TILL YOU DROP - BF Newspaper Benefit - Southbank Poly, Rotary St., London, SE1. Top bands - ESSENTIAL LOG-IC, THE MISTAKES, AGE AGE AND THE AGES plus CHAOS (Que Os?). 8-12 Sat 22 Nov. Waged - £2, unwaged - £1.

'Revolutionary Socialism' Readers Meeting - CRISIS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT IN EUROPE - Wed 26 Nov. 7.30 at Lamb and Flag, off King St., London, W.C.2.

Dear Big Flame,

I'd like to bring to the attention of your readers the recent debate on Northern Ireland which has found its way into the letters section of the British weekly 'New Musical Express'. The NME is one of the few British music papers to give serious and accurate coverage to current affairs issues usually shunned by the music press.

However, not surprisingly, N.Ireland has been an issue rarely covered by NME's reporting staff. With a few exceptions, these contributions have been superficial and full of those weary old cliches and stereotypes we've come to expect from the British media.

Paul Rambali in a recent feature on the Undertones, wrote '(they) live not more than a mile away from each other on the Catholic side of the river. At school, their books taught them one version of history, while those of their counterparts on the opposite bank taught another.' He went on: 'the folly is perpetuated in a conspiracy of ignorance.'

Similar images of a conflict between ignorant warring factions 'at each other's throats' are conjured up by the paper's Northern Ireland correspondent, Gavin Martin, in a feature article on the state of popular music in Northern Ireland. Martin writes of Belfast's 'strife and savage inner turmoil' and of 'a struggle which does nothing but keep the lowlife fighting amongst themselves'.

One Belfast band - Stage B - are described as 'one of the few Belfast bands cutting away the restraints of the tribalistic ties'. 'There is,' according to Martin, 'a very real and frightening amount of barbarism...in the country.' It is, in Martin's opinion, a problem of 'religious confusions'. He goes on: 'What the Northern Ireland situation amounts to is a lot of young people being used as 'pawns in their game' whether that young person be in the British Army, the Provisional IRA or UVF.' Of course, the reference to the British Army is a token one; for Martin's description of

...Supposing for example France were to invade Southern England, expel or massacre the English population and declare the conquered area part of France! Would this be right? If this situation remained for ten years, would that make it right? For a hundred years? Two hundred? This is the position that exists in the Northern part of Ireland.

A section of the population wants this state to continue. It is significant that these people refer to themselves as British. Of course they are! But they are living in Ireland, which is not part of Britain!

Please may I appeal to all British readers of NME - punks, mods, skins, hippies, even the heavy metal hordes! Your government, through your army, is occupying part of my country. They are doing this in your name. Are you aware of this? Are you proud of this? People - 'Lenny's opinions are those of the typical liberal Englishman - i.e. the problem is all due to these horrible little religiously prejudiced Irishmen. Why can't they be like us? The troops are in Ireland to protect the Irish from themselves.

The troops are not in Ireland to protect the Irish. Anyone who thinks that the British Establishment would waste a single drop of blood to help the Irish is an idiot. They are there to protect British strategic imperialistic aims.

It is important to remember that it was a British NOT Irish Government which made religion a matter for discrimination and hence politics. The real losers, as always, are the native

some sort of mutual sectarianism - Republicanism = Loyalism - only leaves us with the old cliché that, despite a few army 'excesses' ('understandable given they do a difficult and tiring job' etc. etc.) they're basically a peace-keeping force.

This three extremes theory has become fairly common amongst certain pop bands (e.g. Specials, Stiff Little Fingers, Crass, to name but three). The idea is a cop-out. Rather than being anti-sectarian as they no doubt believe - they are closing their eyes to it. To put the Republican Movement in the same camp as the British Army or the Loyalists is like calling black anti-racists 'racist' because they demand equality. The nationalist population of the 6 Counties have seen enough discrimination to know how futile it is. Likewise with Britain's black community.

Not all NME reporters are as bad on Northern Ireland as the two I've mentioned. Though NME have shied away from any serious investigative journalism on the 6 Counties, they have at least allowed their letters pages to be taken over - in recent weeks - by those dealing with Ireland. These include some of the best arguments for TROOPS OUT I have read, put over in a forceful and determined way. I've enclosed some examples which you might like to reprint. (See below)

Finally, let's give some serious attention towards increasing our influence in

the pop music world; not only through the music press, but also in gaining the support of musicians themselves. Bands like The Aupaires, The Clash, and Gang of Four have started to raise 'The Irish Question' amongst a new generation of youth. They are still, very much, lone voices in a sea of either opposition or apathy. It's vital that we start to give this area the serious attention it deserves.

Venceremos,
Brian Johnstone
(Pontcanna, Cardiff)

British and Irish - are being killed every day and every day because of your silence the killing will continue. Only public opinion in Britain can change the situation. Won't you help?

I am convinced that an informed public debate in Britain would get the ball rolling. Now is the time for it to start.

This is not written by an extreme Irish Nationalist. I am a rock musician and have played many times in Britain and Northern Ireland. I have no aspirations to a Catholic/Provo All-Ireland Republic. I just want the killing to stop and to make our country, once more, safe for rock and roll.

Liam (Cork)

Although it is not our normal policy to publish letters that have already appeared in other publications, the above letter has prompted us to reproduce extracts from letters that originally appeared in NME. Whilst we strongly disagree with some of the views expressed, we feel the overall discussion in NME is welcome.

Irish Catholics. The origin of the Irish joke is very simply the inability of the native Irish to accommodate the alien Anglo-Saxon culture forced upon them by the British settlers.

There can be no real peace in Ireland until the British realise that the Irish people have a right to self-determination, and the presence of 15,000 foreign British troops prevents the establishment of a just constitution which can reconcile all groups in Ireland.

EXIT... gracefully

LAST MONTH several hundred angry members of EXIT (formerly the Voluntary Euthanasia Society) stormed into Caxton Hall, London, for their Annual Meeting. They kicked out all (bar two) members of the old executive committee who had refused to implement last year's decision to produce a booklet on 'self-deliverance', and went on to elect eight women and four men pledged to publish it. An amazing threat from Dr Scott, an EXIT member, to serve an injunction preventing publication, was ignored.

MEMBERSHIP SOARS

EXIT's original decision to produce a booklet on 'Self-Deliverance' led to a quadrupling of the membership. Not from those who wanted to commit suicide immediately, but from those, mainly older women, who had been through the distressing experience of caring for dying relatives and dreaded the agonising last stages of cancer or multiple sclerosis or the oblivion of senility. They wanted to be assured of an easy and dignified exit. They wanted the right to choose to do what they wished with their own bodies.

RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Like women who demand their 'right to choose' EXIT is opposed by those who believe that your body belongs to God, not yourself, and by doctors who doubt whether patients are capable of taking such important decisions for themselves. Most MPs are opposed because of a fear of the Catholic vote, but others have more interesting reasons.

'I do also hold the belief', wrote Fred Sylvester MP to one of his Manchester constituents, 'that to take life except as a state punishment or as a byproduct of war is to act in the place of God and is therefore not a step to be taken'. Compulsory euthanasia Yes! Voluntary euthanasia No!

EXIT does not counsel suicide. Indeed, the forthcoming booklet will argue against suicide in all but the most extreme circumstances, and generally it is only those in such extreme situations who contact EXIT. The acutely depressed like Isobel Barnett rarely speak to us before they tragically end their lives, often in horrible ways. The

booklet will only be available to EXIT members of three months standing.

ASSISTANCE ILLEGAL

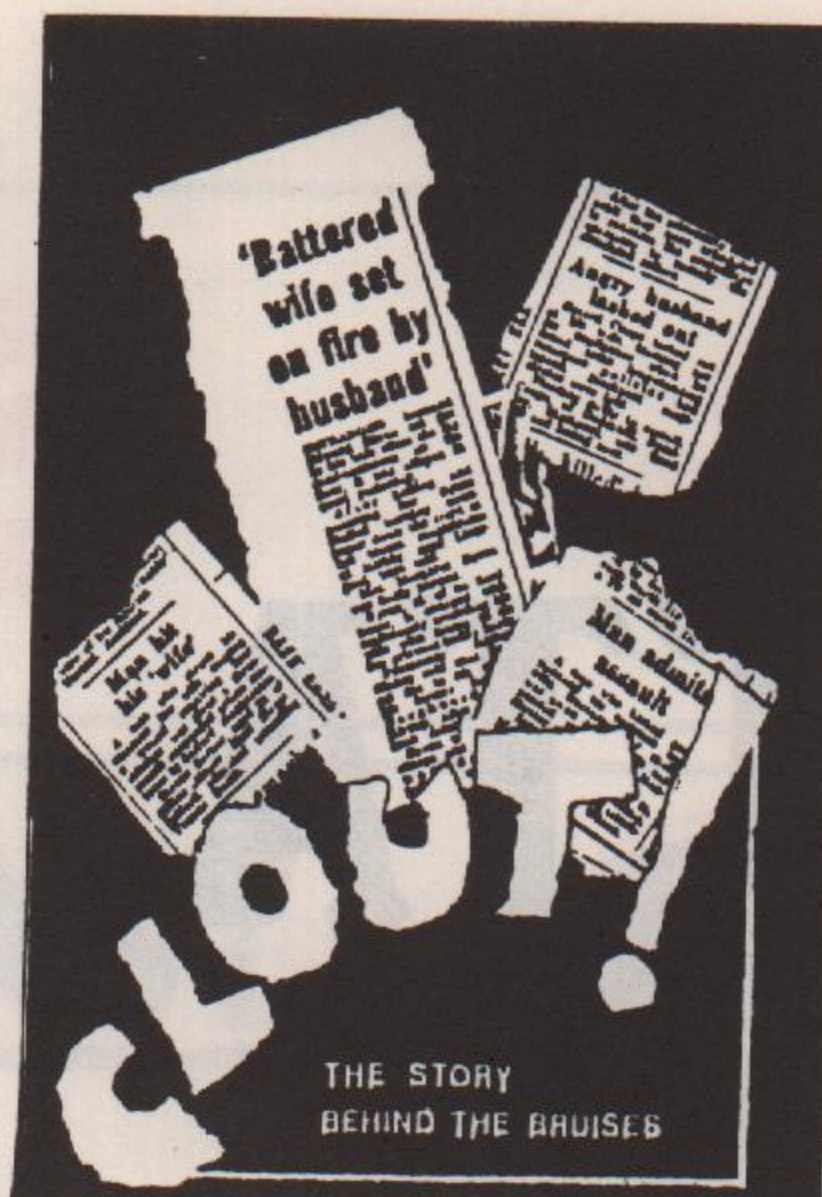
Often it is those whose suffering is greatest and who can expect no end to or relief from their torment who cannot commit suicide without assistance. Yet assistance to suicide carries a jail sentence of up to 14 years - though the courts rarely jail 'mercy killers'. That why EXIT want the law changed. This is explained in the extract from the leaflet. The ethos of EXIT members seems to be 'Live life to the full—but do not prolong a life that is no longer worth living and promises only endless pain'.

Let's fight for higher pensions and better social and medical facilities. More important, however, is the fight by the old and handicapped to contribute as much as anyone else to work and everyday relationships (and not be forced to retire)—to be part of society and not be treated as a protected, impoverished species on the periphery because they are considered less capable than younger or less handicapped people.

Euthanasia concerns millions of people—a realm of experience ignored totally by the predominantly young left. I hope that this article in *Big Flame*, together with an article in the last *Chartist*, marks the beginning of interest by the left in this issue.

Bernard Misrahi

For films, literature or application forms, contact EXIT at 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8 5PG.



from CLOUT

A NEW LIFE

Where could I go to seek shelter and care?
So I took all the beatings and Had to stay there
I pretended to laugh so that no one Would sense,
That the happy, smiling figure was just A pretence.
A figure I was, not a person you see He had knocked all my spirit right Out of me.
Please give me strength to carry on And face another day.
Tomorrow may bring peace of mind A happiness my way
I put no value on life since life Means little to me,
I've even thought of suicide how easy That would be.
Why should I give up without putting Up a fight?
My faith has grown stronger it seems Overnight.
I came to the refuge almost out of My mind
But the children are happy, the women Are kind.
In a few months time I hope to Be free.
Then we'll start a new life my Children and me.

Kaye

A NEW LIFE

The Commonword Writers Workshop has successfully set out to let battered women tell their own stories. With so many books around these days full of 'expert' analyses on why women are battered, it's really great to read a book in which women speak for themselves—in what is a very moving and readable book. Particularly striking is the way the women come over very strong and caring despite the terror and difficulties of their lives.

MYTHS

This book successfully explodes all the myths about battery, that women don't leave because they 'like it', 'deserve it' or that they are just passive victims. Through the women's stories and poems about their lives a real picture emerges of the extent of women's oppression within the family, their lack of choice, and the appalling situations they endure at the hands of men, but despite all this women have managed with the help of Womens Aid refuges to reconstruct their lives and their children's in the face of all opposition.

MEN'S POWER

An omission in the book is that no light is adequately shed on why men terrorise women generally. Some of the questions put to the women in the book lead to an assumption that the problem is down to individual men who either drink too much or come from a violent home themselves. Whereas, in fact, the individual women talking in this book show that it's men's power over women and their determination to keep this at any cost that is the root of male violence. Don't forget that 25% of reported violent crime is wife assault, and the incidence of unreported rape and assault on women is inestimable.

This book should be read, both because it is a powerful and

positive statement from women who know what it is all about, and a powerful condemnation of male violence but also because through this book women have found a voice which is long overdue. It remains to be seen whether society will stand up and listen.

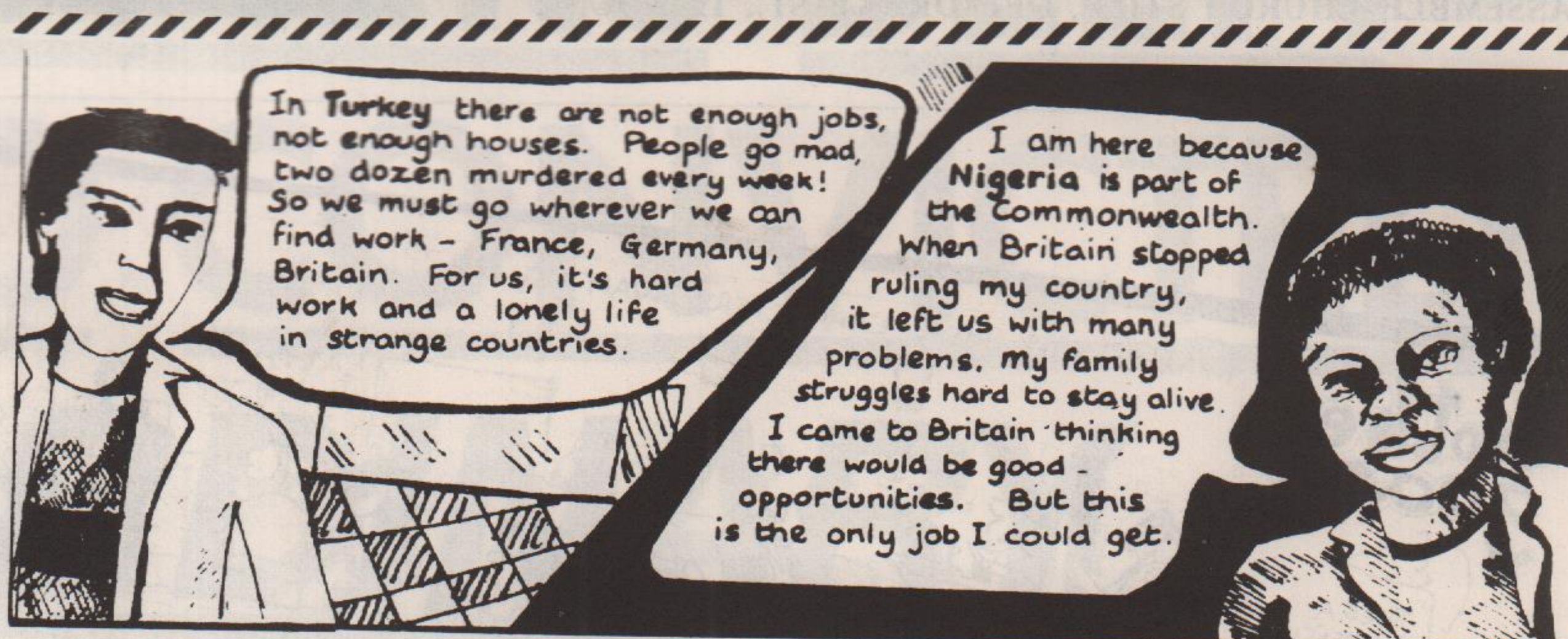
'I left home after getting a first-class beating which my daughters witnessed: "My Dad hits you. You are always crying in the bedroom." That's the time, definitely, to get out. Then, you've got other people to think about, not just yourself. And they deserve to live.'

'I would have left sooner if I'd known about Women's Aid. If I'd have known how easy it was to get in, I wouldn't have had my second child. I thought you had to go in on crutches. I thought you really had to prove you'd been battered.'

'All I can say is, thank God for Women's Aid. It should be renamed, "The answer to battered women's prayers."'

from women at one of Manchester's refuges for battered women.

Copies can be got through Commonword, 61 Bloom Street, Manchester. 50p + 25p postage.



ANTI-RACIST COMICS

Concord Comics have just produced four 8-page cartoon stories about immigration. They are excellent. Each one is set in the UK in everyday situations—at home, working in a hotel, at the football match, at school, on the streets and so on—and takes up questions about race, culture and immigration that occur in those situations.

No. 1, *The Goodbye Party*, is a

family giving a send off to daughter Janet and an ambitious son-in-law Martin who are emigrating to Australia. Martin gets hot under the collar blaming coloured immigrants for the state Britain is in now but the grandfather just sits in his armchair laughing; he's seen it all before.

Grandfather explains that immigration is nothing new and that

people have often had to move to escape starvation, poverty and to find work. In fact, this particular family has Irish ancestry and he explains how the land was owned by Englishmen who didn't live there while the Irish had to work for them. 'When times are bad...it's easy to put the blame on immigrants...In Australia the English are blamed for strikes.'

No. 2 is about a white girl and a black boy, Sharon and Elroy. Their romance unleashes the anger of Sharon's dad and Sharon looks for an answer to him. Elroy's friends explain to her about sugar, the West Indies, slavery, wage-slavery and so on while the every day hassles of the police and unemployment are the constant background to the lives of the four young people as they talk. As in all the cartoons, an effort is made to challenge patriarchy—it's Marcia, the young black woman who does Black Studies with most information at her finger tips.

No. 3 describes the feelings amongst a bunch of school friends, some black some white, leading up to *The Attack* on an Asian shop. The 'British Race Party' are humiliated at the elections and Gary hears that some young white supporters are going to attack his Asian friend's shop. Gary has to decide whether to get involved and warn his friend Asha. When he does the family agonise whether to stand up for themselves or lie low. A history lesson about Asian people comes across as does the unsympathetic attitude of the police.

No. 4 tackles *Strange Customs*, but not in a liberal way of people

are all different and isn't that nice? but by taking the reader straight into the harsh realities of black immigrants' lives, including an Immigration Detention Centre and immigrants of many races working together for low wages in a hotel. It explains the realities of class justice, of being tied to an employer and a visa very clearly in a story about a South African diamond smuggler.

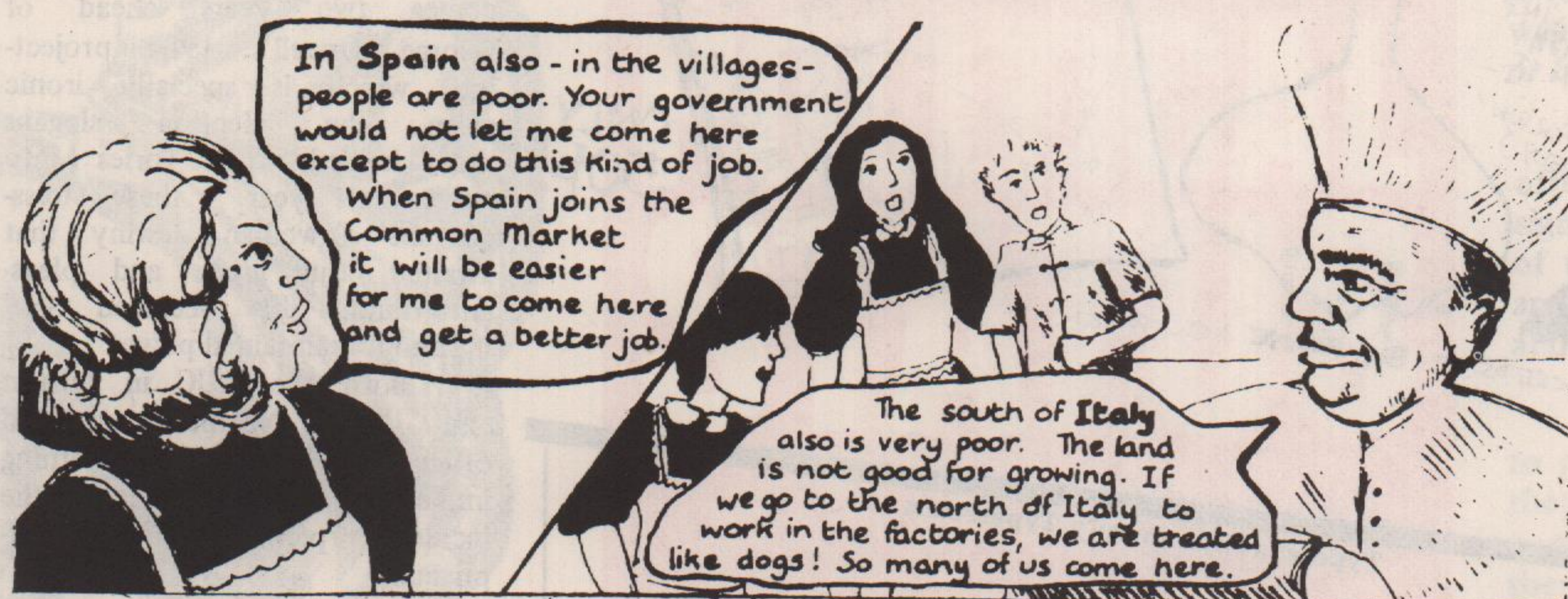
All of these cartoon books include extra reading lists, loads of facts and figures, an Asian recipe, an address list and Games to set children talking honestly about the issue of Immigration. They are just what we've been waiting for and I recommend that every reader of this review orders copies for schools, youth clubs, libraries as well as yourself.

The Goodbye Party
The Attack
Sharon and Elroy
Strange Customs

40 p each includes postage
£3.50 in packs of ten
£2.25 a set of four in folder

from National Extension College,
18 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge
CB2 2HN

Peter Shipstone



Big Flame

ANWAR DITTA

BRING HER CHILDREN HOME

At the recent socialist feminist conference on Women's Oppression and Imperialism, Anwar Ditta spoke of her continuing struggle to bring her children to Rochdale from Pakistan.

Her case, which was strongly supported by the conference, is a clear proof that 'imperialism' is not something 6000 miles away; it is experienced daily by black women and men here in Britain.

Last July, the Immigration Appeals Tribunal dismissed Anwar's case, ignoring masses of evidence that these are her children, on the grounds that she and her husband had falsified her age in the past, so they were probably lying about the children now. The Home Office has since refused to allow Anwar to appeal against the Tribunal ruling - they regard the case as closed.

Anwar is fighting back with a National Demonstration on Sat., Nov. 15 in Rochdale. She is speaking at meetings around the country; several groups of women at the conference were involved in organising these.

Her lawyers are challenging the Home Office refusal of a 2nd. appeal, by an action in the High Court. The Defence Committee are trying to raise £10,000 to send an investigating team to Pakistan (Cheques to Anwar Ditta Legal Fund, 127 Crawford St., Rochdale, Lancs.).

The Home Office want to forget Anwar and her children. It's up to us to make sure that they can't.

DEMONSTRATE SATURDAY NOV. 15. ROCHDALE - ASSEMBLE CHURCH STILE, OFF DRAKE ST., 12 NOON



Big Flame Photo



A Future On Rations?

A Lurgan housewife last week had an alarming experience - both for her and those who live out the early 1980's in Britain under the abrasive rule of Margaret Thatcher. She had sent off her Family Allowance book for renewal to the local Department of Health and Social Security. Instead she got back what she said was called a Rations Book for her daughter dated 1982.

This naturally caused some excitement in her neighbourhood and the next day, two plain clothes men apparently called round to her house to regain the document and to ask her nicely not to talk about the incident.

Its implications are clear. Mrs. Thatcher and her hawkish cohorts have a sharp vision of the near future for those whom they rule - a Britain back on rations and who knows what other devices of social control. And all this comes two years ahead of George Orwell's 1984 projection, which is specially ironic given the election slogans that helped the Tories into power last year - these stressed the Orwellian destiny that awaited 'this green and pleasant land, this sceptred isle' if Labour maintained power.

Both the RUC in Lurgan and the Northern Ireland office in Belfast had nothing immediate to say about the incident; perhaps hardly surprising.

Reprinted from 'Hibernia' September 1980.

brother goose

WHAT ARE ALL THESE CHARACTERS WAITING FOR??

TAKES A COMMERCIAL BREAK

WHY DID KING HASSAN KEEP OUR GRACIOUS QUEEN WAITING?

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